JULY
30th
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PUBLISHED
THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

Leonard H. Nason
Alan LeMay
Thomson Burtis
Georges Surdez
S. B. H. Hurst
Albert William Stone
Nevil Henshaw
Rolf Bennett
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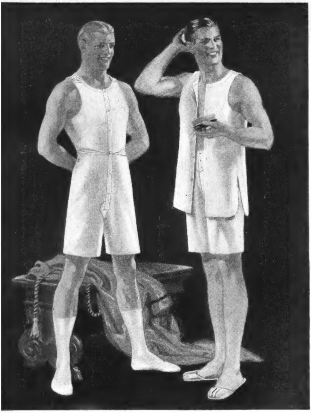
1 Complete Novel
1 Complete Novelette



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ADVENTURE
July 30th, 1925

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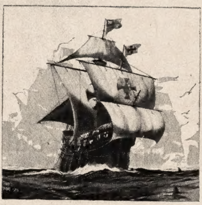
Volume 53
Number 6

The Toll of Water

THREE little ships weighed anchor in the harbor of Palos, Spain, four hundred and thirty-three years ago and set sail upon a perilous adventure; 88 hardy, hopeful souls faced the unknown. Had Columbus and his men gone down who can say what the history of America would have been?

Imagine a fleet of 68 Santa Marias, 68 Pintos and 68 Niñas—204 ships in all—going to the bottom of the sea with every one of their crews drowned! Then you will have some idea of the number of persons who perished last year in the United States from drowning accidents. More than 6,000 drowned.



"Imagine a Fleet * * *"

Day after day, all through the summer, you read the tragic story of death by drowning. Some one dares a beginner to swim out to the raft. Or perhaps the water is too rough. Even the strongest swimmers take unnecessary chances. "Go ahead, be a sport" has brought disaster to thousands.

Don't Be a "Sport"—Be a Sportsman

There is a vast difference between a sport and a sportsman. The sportsman is courageous and willingly hazards his life for others—but he is not a daredevil.

The sport, showily daring, is the one who does stunts to dazzle onlookers—who dives without knowing the depth or what lies beneath the surface—who swims far out, disregarding unknown currents, undertow and cramps.

Learn to swim—not alone because swimming is joyous recreation and splendid exercise—but so that you can save your own life and the lives of others if called upon. Swimming is not at all a difficult accomplishment. Once learned it cannot be forgotten. Good instructors may be found almost everywhere. It is of highest importance to be well taught.

Your Chance to Save a Life

There is one thing that *everybody*, young and old, should know how to do—revive the apparently drowned. Often they are not dead though life seems to be extinct. Patient, persistent manipulation of the right kind would bring them back to consciousness. It is heartbreaking to think of the lives that could have been saved if some one in the crowd, standing paralyzed with horror, had but known the simple manipulations necessary to rekindle the vital spark.

This summer, be prepared. Never court danger but be ready to meet the great hazard that sometimes lurks in water sports.

THE LIGHT THAT NEVER FAILS

During the months of July, August and September, deaths from accidents lead all other causes—except heart disease and tuberculosis—among the 22,000,000 policyholders in the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. Deaths from drowning are at their height during these months.

In July 1924 the number of deaths among Metropolitan policyholders from drowning was about twice as many as from typhoid fever and diphtheria together.

It is the duty of parents to have their children instructed in swimming and the art of resuscitation, so that the danger from drowning attending summer vacations may be minimized. The Metropolitan has prepared a booklet, "Artificial Respiration" which shows by diagrams just how to restore breathing by manipulation of the apparently drowned body, as well as what to do in the case of gas suffocation or electric shock. Carbon monoxide poisoning claims an increasing number of victims each year because it is not generally known that artificial respiration, applied in time, will restore life. The information contained in this booklet is valuable and may be wanted any moment. The booklet will be mailed free. Send for it.

HALEY FISKE, *President.*

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July 30, 1925
Vol. LIII. No. 6

Published Three Times a Month by The Ridgway Company

J. H. GANNON, President — C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Contents for July 30th, 1925, Issue

Knaves of Spades *A Complete Novel* . . . . . . Georges Surdez 1
French Colonies—the spirit of *Edmond Chaptel* was not easily broken.

Top Horse from Hogjaw . . . . Alan LeMay 79
Cattle Country—which bronc was a jump ahead?

The Mutiny . . . . S. B. H. Hurst 86
Sea—*Captain Parrot* was no sky pilot.

Fate and the Fish-hooks *Convicts at Sea* . . . . . Thomas Dunbabin 96

The Bold Dragoon *A Four-Part Story Part III* . . . . Leonard H. Nason 99
England, 1753—"Keep your purse. You have the wrong man!"

The Old Saloon *Verse* . . . . Bill Adams 123

The Killer, the King and the Wise Man . . . . . Nevil Henshaw 124
Louisiana—Fate in the thrown cards.

Baseball Is 'Ell *Verse* . . . . Hubert Kelley 132

South of Sarajevo . . . . Fred. F. Fleischer 134
Near East—when the Gipsies came.

**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from preceding page)

The Parson and the Injun . . . . **Albert William Stone** 140
West—there was a sympathy between them.

Naval Duelists *A Matter of Honor* . . . . . . **Eugene Cunningham** 149

The Bird of Fortune . . . . **Rolf Bennett** 150
Waterfront—*Bill* wanted a parrot in the hand.

Wells, Wells, Wells! ***A Complete Novelette*** . . . . . **Thomson Burtis** 154
Texas—*Slim Evans* steered for a smash.

The Camp-Fire **A free-to-all meeting-place for readers, writers and adventurers** 171

Camp-Fire Stations 187

Lost Trails 187

Various Practical Services Free to Any Reader 182

Ask Adventure 183
A free question and answer service bureau of information on outdoor life and activities everywhere. Comprising seventy geographical sub-divisions, with special sections on Radio, Mining and Prospecting, Weapons, Fishing, Forestry, Aviation, Army Matters, North American Anthropology, Health on the Trail, Railroading, Herpetology and Entomology.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . **Neil O'Keeffe**

Cover Design . . . . **A. L. Ripley**

One New Serial and Three Complete Novelettes

MEN OF all trades, men of all nations and races, men of all castes rushed to the gold fields. Old San Francisco was the bubbling cauldron of the world's dissatisfied. Here gold was dear, but life was valued as nothing. "DAYS OF '49" is a six-part story by Gordon Young beginning in the next issue.

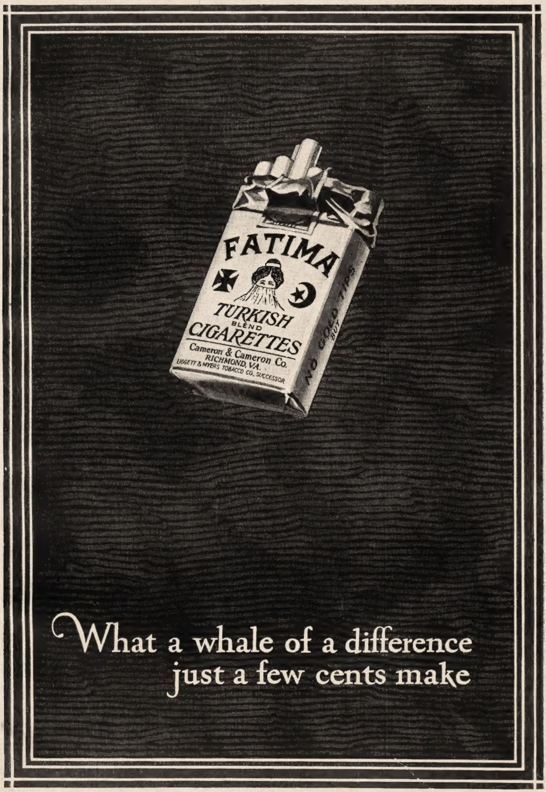
WARY *Captain Mac* was not given to rash judgments. But when a knife flashed on the *Penguin* who could help suspecting the ill-favored *Taber?* "THREE KEGS OF SPECIE," in the next issue, is a complete novelette by John Webb.

KURVENAL had all the instincts of the jungle, and a strange mingling of white and savage morals. He found that both were necessary to gain the "name of honor." "BROWN KURVENAL," a complete novelette by H. Bedford-Jones, will appear in the next issue.

DECK-HAND *Mulligan* swore the mate was a coward and the Sailors' Mission a nuisance. "THE MIRACLE AT THE MISSION," a complete novelette by W. Townend, will be in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Adventure **is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**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Excerpts from editorial in
The Daily Reporter, White Plains, N.Y.
By W. Livingston Larned

AN UNUSUAL project has been set in motion in New York. A "Business Building" is to rise on Broadway, at 173rd Street, dedicated to Christianity. To be known as the "Broadway Temple," it will contain a church, offices, auditoriums, schools, hotel accommodations, cafeterias, etc. And to a large extent, it will be erected by popular subscription. Individuals buy bonds, representing a 5 per cent investment and the total cost will be approximately $4,000,000.

It is the first undertaking of its kind, and has so many amazing features that we will do well to observe some of these innovations. For this is a combination of church and skyscraper. Business and Christianity will be housed under one roof.

This Broadway Temple is, in a sense, a gigantic symbol of the uncontrovertible fact that Godliness can and should be continuous.

Broadway will be the better for a substantial reminder of this Holy Presence. From every vantage point, on sunny days, or nights filled with the sinister menace of storm, a high-flung cross of unquenchable light will be visible, glittering against the heavens. And he will murmur to himself, reverently, "The Holy Spirit bides with me, wherever I may be, walking or sleeping."

Broadway Temple will cover 26,000 square feet of foundation space, facing a whole block on Broadway. It will have a beautiful tower, 24 stories high; six million people will see a revolving cross of light, 34 feet high, on its topmost pinnacle. The church auditorium will seat 2200; there will be Sunday school rooms, a social hall and every modern convenience for religious and community work. An apartment hotel in the tower is to contain 644 rooms, public offices and dining halls. Apartments for housekeeping in the two wings will accommodate 500 persons. And there are stores fronting on Broadway.

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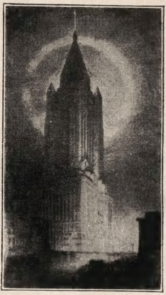

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"AFTER I GAVE BIRTH to my child, I felt very much 'run down.' I had constant trouble with my stomach, and what troubled me most—I suffered from terrible sties. Finally an eye specialist prescribed Fleischmann's Yeast. In two months there wasn't a trace left of the sties. My complexion improved wonderfully. I no longer have an aversion for food. And I manage to keep and look young with the help of Fleischmann's Yeast." MRS. SARAH STEINHARDT, New York City.

What Everybody Knows

The danger of clogged intestines
The evils of digestive troubles
and disfiguring skin eruptions
The tragedy of lowered vitality

NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active. And day by day it releases new stores of energy.

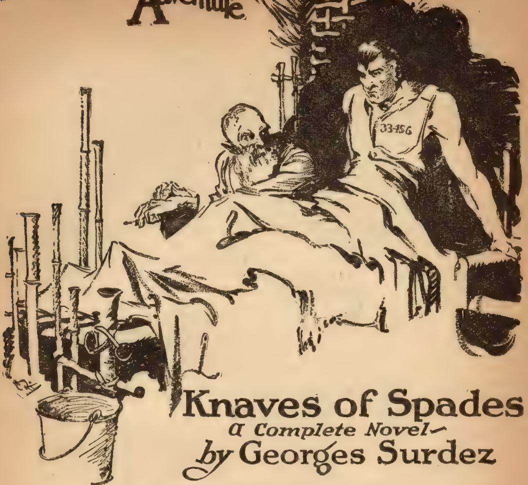
All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today! Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. And let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Health Research Dept. **Z-18**, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington Street, New York City.

(LEFT)

"INVALIDED from Royal Navy with chronic constipation. Went to India. . . . Advised to try Canada. Was just able to get into army, but after 2½ years in trenches, returned to Canada totally unfit and pensioned. In 1919 I gave Fleischmann's Yeast a fair trial, thank God. Six months afterward I passed for life insurance and my pension stopped. I am now absolutely fit and never need a laxative; and this after over 20 years of suffering."
HERBERT J. PARROTT, Calgary, Alta.

EAT 2 OR 3 CAKES regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices or milk—or just plain. *For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) night and morning.*

July 30, 1925 Adventure Vol. LIII No. 6



Knaves of Spades

A Complete Novel

by Georges Surdez

Author of "The Tool of Allah," "Sudanese Trails," etc.

"ANOTHER specimen with pronounced facial asymmetry," the doctor said. "The nose deviates; the jaw is bestial. Many scars ——"

Seated before the table were two military doctors, a captain and a lieutenant. The captain, nearing fifty, graying beard, gold-rimmed spectacles, did most of the talking.

The man in question stood before them, naked. His face was sinister, and, in spite of the powerful muscles on his long limbs, the pasty pallor of his face made him appear ill. A tattoo mark spread on his chest, blurred indistinct, as if the needle had been used to erase a previous handiwork.

"Saying what's wrong with my face won't help me, Doctor," he said aggressively.

"If I had told the lieutenant that you showed symptoms of liver trouble," suggested the officer patiently, "you would not be angry. You're no more to blame for your face than for your liver. We note your characteristics, see the way you react and learn. Some time it may help us save some other poor fellow."

"I'm a sort of human guinea-pig, then? I'm on to your bluff. You get paid for this. That's all you worry about."

"A word of advice—" the doctor resumed. "You see the stripes on my coat? I happen to be first a doctor, then an officer. Therefore, I understand you mean no harm. But usually it is foolish to speak defiantly. Get dressed!"

He turned to his aid.

"Discouraging. The immense majority are in the same class. Worthless mothers, no father, or deprived of both. Something should be done. But who knows what?

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We can't change the ways of humanity over night."

He shrugged wearily, helpless before the misery of the world seeping into his inspection room.

"Next!" he called sharply.

As if in a dream, Edmond Chaptel moved forward.

He was aware of his comrades, lolling against the walls of the room in various stages of undress, exchanging guarded words occasionally, and of the sergeant in charge, standing by the open door. The kepi was clamped solidly on his small head, secured by the narrow chin-strap circling the massive jaws.

He was a machine, a cog without personal feelings. His walk was mechanical. On the way from the depot, Chaptel had been fascinated by the regular steps, and by the precision of his voice, a voice that tolled off orders as a clock ticks off seconds. He was the personification of the military grind, the grind that had seized Chaptel for two years, perhaps longer, if the tales he had heard were true.

At the age of twenty-one, Frenchmen are called to the colors. Every year, among the thousands called for duty, there exists a small proportion of young men who have already served terms in prison. To mix them with the sound, normal elements that form the home regiments would prove unwise. Special units perforce were created to receive them: The African Battalions of Light Infantry, the Bataillons d'Infanterie Légère d' Afrique the famous Bat' d'Af', garrisoned in North Africa.

Chaptel had just arrived to join the 1st Battalion, in Ain Saffra. This meant that he had served, before his twenty-first birthday, at least six months in prison. Yet there was nothing of the conventional prisoner about him. He himself knew that he had shaken off the effects of his half-year sojourn within walls, knew that he had reacted against environment, and was as sound mentally and morally as he had ever been. But the law is the law and knows no exception?

He had joined his present comrades in Lyons. Two days, three days, more than a week, he had been with them. Yet they kept him out of their conversations, out of their lives, feeling evidently that although with them he was not one of their kind. Queer fellows, a collection of nightmare faces, men who spoke a slang foreign to him. Protruding jaws, low foreheads, thick lips that twisted, thin lips that sneered—and eyes that did not meet the glance squarely.

In the train from Lyons to Marseilles, and on the boat that carried them from France to Algeria across the Mediterranean, Chaptel had attempted to make friends or, at least, a friend. This was his first long voyage, his first adventure into far countries, and sentiments surged within him for expression. Once, impressed by the magnificence of sea and sky, by the unusual warmth of the air, by the glow of the more powerful sun, he had remarked to the nearest man concerning the peculiar sensations all this aroused in him, something also of hope for the future. The other had looked upon him in bewilderment, had shrugged and walked away.

The voice of the captain broke through his reverie, a curt reminder that the inspection room was no place for musing.

He answered questions as to his name, age, place of birth, was measured and weighed. After these preliminaries, the doctor thumped his chest, examined his teeth, his eyes.

"No trace of degeneracy. No tattoo marks," he dictated. Then commented: "Unusual specimen. A case in a thousand. Doesn't belong here."

Mutely, Chaptel agreed with him.

"Criminal record?" the doctor questioned.

"Six months in prison."

"Stealing?"

Chaptel flushed.

"No, Doctor."

"Women?"

"No, Doctor."

"What did you do?"

"Struck a gendarme. He lost an eye."

The men on the benches overheard, and laughed. One or two yelled in mock applause.

The sergeant by the door opened his mouth, and a command hurtled like a bullet—

"Still!"

"You seem a good sort of a fellow," the doctor declared. "This will be only a passing trial for you. Don't allow yourself to sink. I'm noting your name. With good conduct you will be allowed to enter a regular regiment at the end of eight months."

"Thank you, Doctor."

"Get dressed."

Back to his place on the bench, Chaptel

dressed leisurely. For the first time he felt hopeful. The doctor evidently meant what he said. And eight months was not an eternity.

"I knifed a cop myself," boasted the youth next to him. "But I didn't get caught. They pinched me breaking into a store one night."

Chaptel was spared further details. The vigilant sergeant invited the young man to silence.

When the last of the men had been examined, they glanced expectantly at the sergeant, wondering what was to happen next. Then a fellow whom Chaptel had never seen before, came out and stood between the two doctors.

HE WAS of average height. But he was broad, his arms were enormous, his back muscles swelled abnormally. His legs were astonishingly slender for a man of his bulk, wiry, covered with hair. Tattooed across his back appeared a crudely executed drawing: An army officer in full uniform, crucified. Above the head, the legend stood out in bold letters: *Mort aux Vaches.* Death to Cows, the battle cry of the Paris apache. Just as every member of detective and police forces in America is a "bull," he is branded a "cow" in France. Why the feminine? Greater delicacy of language, who knows?

The newcomer saluted the doctors respectfully.

"I've seen you before. What's your name?"

"Achille Duval. Yes, you saw me before, Doctor. You have a sacred good memory. I'm the man who served five years in the penitentiary for assaulting a sergeant."

"I remember you. Got a new tattoo, eh? You think that drawing on your back artistic, pretty?"

"Not at all, Doctor. I told the fool who did it to give me something distinguished, out of the ordinary. That's what I got. It's too big to disguise, ain't it?"

Duval glanced quickly about the room. When the black eyes struck his own glance, Chaptel felt a sort of shock in the pit of the stomach.

Duval was attractive, and at the same time, repellent. He was not good looking in the strictest sense of the word. His nose was too broad, the jaws too powerful. But he was beautiful as an animal is beautiful, with the suggestion of intense physical strength, of immense possibilities for love and hatred. His eyebrows, thick and dark, almost met across his face, and only a narrow strip of forehead showed between them and the crisp black hair, hair that was still bristling, newly grown on his shaven head.

"You've come back here to finish your term. You have only three months to serve," the doctor went on. "You, better than any one else, know what the military penitentiary is like. You don't want to get back there. Keep yourself in hand, Duval, and don't seek quarrels with non-coms."

Duval half turned, and glared at the sergeant, his teeth bared in a sort of grin.

"It's hard to hold in, Doctor," he said loudly. "Most of them treat us like dogs. This sergeant, for instance. I remember him. His nose deviates, his jaws are strong as a bulldog's. He should be with us, not over us."

"That's no way to start out," the doctor admonished. "You'll offend the sergeant."

"No, Doctor," the non-com offered, without moving from his post. "What that scum says don't touch me any."

But Chaptel, who was watching him closely, saw the blood ebb from his neck gradually, and his tiny eyes followed Duval.

"Forget it, Sergeant!" ordered the doctor. "Duval was joking. The hospital is not the barrack-yard, and what's said here doesn't concern the outside."

He gathered his papers and signified to the sergeant that he could clear the room.

"*Fixe!* Get out into the yard, all of you!" the non-com ordered.

He stood aside and allowed them to pass out one by one.

"Get in ranks according to height."

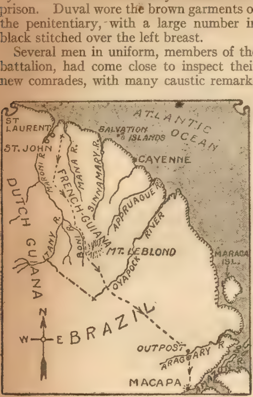
Chaptel found himself next to Duval. The man from the penitentiary had assumed an expression of extreme innocence, and placidly returned the stare of the sergeant.

"Stay here," ordered the latter. "I'll be back soon."

He walked away through the shimmering light of the yard to a small building at the far end of the esplanade, evidently the canteen, leaving the men in the sun.

Chaptel glanced to right and left. The faces were far from prepossessing at best. As the uniforms had not yet been issued, all were in civilian clothing, ranging from well-cut broadcloth suits to overalls. The headgears comprised every known style of hat and cap. The shoes were as varied, from elastic tops to cord-soled sandals worn by those of the men recently released from prison. Duval wore the brown garments of the penitentiary, with a large number in black stitched over the left breast.

Several men in uniform, members of the battalion, had come close to inspect their new comrades, with many caustic remarks on their appearance and foul references to their morals and behavior. One or two of them recognized Duval and greeted him without much show of cordiality.



Feeling that he had the good fortune to be next to a man of experience, Chaptel questioned the ex-convict.

"What do we do next? Why do we wait here?"

Duval did not turn his head, but spoke from the corner of the mouth nearest Chaptel, with scarcely a movement of his face.

"The major commanding will make a little speech. Then the uniforms will be issued."

"When do we eat?"

"At five."

"Good food?"

"Not for you. For me, yes. I've starved so often in the hills that anything tastes good."

"You mean, *they* starve you up there?"

"Shut up. Here he comes."

The sergeant was coming back, accompanied by two other non-coms. His face had resumed its usual pigmentation, perhaps he was a trifle redder on the cheek bones. The impersonal manner he had shown in the hospital-room was gone. He halted five paces from the line, examined each man in turn, slowly, from head to foot. Chaptel understood; he was asserting his hold over them, same old trick, played by prison-keepers and gendarmes, staring a man out of countenance. When his own turn came he fastened his eyes on the sergeant's brows, and remained at attention.

"Your papa must be proud of you, jail-bird!" was the comment.

Chaptel was compelled to admit to himself that his father was not proud of his son. But the non-com., from long habit, was able to color his tone with subtle insult. The puerile "papa," combined with the suavely pronounced "jail-bird" assumed tremendously offensive qualities.

"Out in a year—no, in eight months, you?"

The sergeant lighted a cigaret, blew out the match—

"Never!"

Chaptel felt the blood rise to his face, was about to speak.

"Shut up!" Duval warned.

It was not a whisper, but a thought transmitted without sound.

Chaptel understood. Back-talk was unsafe. In prison, the keepers first would coax the prisoners into conversation, then gradually lash them into frenzy, resulting invariably in a lengthened term.

"You have already made friends with Duval!" the sergeant resumed. "You must be a pretty disgusting sort of fellow. You're known for what you are."

Chaptel saw that Duval was quivering. The non-com. pressed his advantage. He walked closer, blew smoke into Duval's face.

"You took the little man under your wing? Nice boy, isn't he? You'll be together a long while. Your breed never gets out of here. You'll take your pal into the hills. Paris? Good-by, Paris—and the pretty girls. Do you ever think that if you had worked one-tenth as hard in Paris as you have down out here, you wouldn't be here? And to think how your tastes have changed." Then, as Duval groaned inarticulately—"Look me in the eyes, Duval. What do you see? You see the Sergeant Marietti knows he'll get you before you finish your term."

"I'm looking a pig in the eye, Marietti, a dirty Corsican pig. You have no witness, save that kid next to me, and he won't back you up. You can ride me as much as you want, every time I see you, I'll look at you. You'll know what I'm thinking: Marietti is a —— Corsican pig."

Chaptel recalled much the same words exchanged between small boys. Here were two men, vibrant with rage, exchanging puerile threats, and resenting the implied insults.

"You're butting your head against a stone wall," Marietti warned.

"Go learn to speak French," Duval suggested mildly.

The average Corsican non-com. in the French Army keeps a strong trace of Italian accent, and is sensitive on the subject. Marietti stood still, then shook himself as if dazed. He was about to speak when the other non-com. ran down the line, pushing the men into a semblance of order.

A group of officers was approaching, the major commanding the battalion conspicuous, slim-booted legs, broad shoulders, bronzed face, a glitter of stripes and medals.

"*Fixe!*" Marietti called, himself freezing in place, hand to the vizor of his kepi.

Awkwardly the men imitated him.

"Rest," the major suggested mildly.

He turned to the lieutenant at his side.

"You have the *thing?*" he asked.

"Here, Major."

The major received a folded sheet of paper. He was manifestly bored, and desired to get matters over with. He scanned the paper for several seconds, spread his feet apart as if to make a tremendous effort, and read:

"Young men, in the name of the battalion, I welcome you among us. Accept bravely, happily, with dignity the trade of the soldier. Learn to obey in silence, to respect and love discipline."

Here, the major turned to the lieutenant, impatiently pointed at the paper. The subaltern leaned forward and deciphered the doubtful words in a low voice. Then the major resumed:

"There are many among you who remain under the impression that your presence here is an added punishment for the errors of your past. Such a conception of the African Light Infantry is erroneous and insulting. The battalion is not a unit for punishment, but a 'test corps.' You not only are soldiers, privileged to wear a uniform, but you are entering a unit famed for valor. Everywhere Frenchmen have fought, the African Light Infantry has been: In Africa, in Mexico, in Japan, in Tonking, in Madagascar, in China. France has trusted you with a flag. Would she have done this had she believed you convicts? The most glorious feat of arms in this very Algeria was done by your predecessors: Mazagran, one hundred and twenty-three men against thousands, victoriously defending a town. Is that anything to be ashamed of?

"Your past is forgotten. You have paid your debt. Forget the stories you have heard before arriving here. I am human. The officers are human. And the sergeants, far from being the brutes they have been depicted, are honorable soldiers of sound moral character.

"If one of you ever feels that he has been undeservedly punished, let him come to me. I will investigate, seek the truth, and if warranted, will lift the punishment."

Not bad, thought Chaptel. The major would not make a public promise which he did not intend to keep. The truth was, everything that had occurred up to now, had been principally verbal. Of course, here was Duval, just returned from the hills, where he claimed to have been hungry—and Marietti. Yet of the two, the major and Marietti, the first was the chief. And his intentions certainly were good.

"If I find the punishment justly inflicted," the major concluded, "I'll double it. Else every one would complain, and my time would not suffice to hear all the tales. That's all."

There was a string to the altruistic offer! How often, in a controversy between sergeant and private, would the low-rank man be granted the benefit of the doubt?

The major left, followed by the other officers, and tearing up the written speech as he walked.

"Right by fours, march!" Marietti barked, leading the way to the main building.

He again halted by the door to allow the men to file in.

"Hurry, jail-birds, blackguards, scum, offals of the universe!"

Chaptel bent his head meekly.

Like the chorus of a familiar song came the mocking echo of the major's words:

"You are soldiers. Your errors of the past are forgiven."

UP TO his fifteenth year, Chaptel had enjoyed a peaceful, fairly prosperous home life. His father was a clerk in a notary's office, commanding a fair salary, four hundred francs a month, which to a family of three almost permitted luxury. In school he had made good in his studies and won several purses which would entitle him to free tuition in a lycée. And his conservative father naturally wished him to embrace some paper-scratching profession.

But Chaptel Junior felt the call of a trade, a desire to learn of mechanical things, not abstractly, but actually. At length he was permitted to become apprentice in a machine shop.

At seventeen he became known in the small circle of the town for his deft handling of motors. This admitted him into the society of men older than himself by several years, many of them having already served their time in the army. He soon became familiar with the anti-militarist spirit. He had a quick tongue and was not devoid of wit. He soon learned the stock phrases of the orators he heard in the cafés, and jokingly imitated them.

Soon after his eighteenth birthday, Chaptel took part in a mass meeting denouncing the authorities. A strike in the silk mills had recently been declared. Scarcely realizing the gravity of the situation, he made public speeches. Perhaps he went a trifle far.

Sufficient to say that a certain afternoon, while delivering a fiery harangue, he was startled by the appearance of two husky well-fed gendarmes in the doorway of the hall. They came down the aisle with slow majestic tread. One placed a hand on his shoulder and suggested that he accompany them to the commissary of police.

Chaptel was aware that he had nothing to fear. A sermon, a reminder of the shame he was bringing upon his father, a warning and dismissal.

And so he smiled, and assured the minions of the law that he would be happy to follow them wherever they might lead. But the crowd viewed the proceeding from another angle. The self-elected leader pushed between the young man and the gendarmes, and informed the latter that it were best for them to leave the place peaceably. There was a little shoving, a few verbal threats.

Who struck the first blow, no one ever could find out with certainty. The gendarmes said the strikers, the strikers accused the gendarmes. Suddenly Chaptel found himself the center of a milling group, while a hand on his collar tugged him this way and that, the hand of the corporal of gendarmes. The pull on his throat half strangled him, and he struck out desperately, without conscious aim. The man holding him fell to the floor, was trampled upon. His partner drew first his saber, then his revolver, firing several shots into the ceiling.

Reserves of gendarmes, stationed outside, rushed in. There was the sound of beefy fists on meaty faces, much shouting. Chaptel found himself in the open street, solidly held by two uniformed men, and shoved through a menacing crowd, while ten feet behind, the corporal of gendarmes, his face streaming blood, followed, supported by solicitous comrades.

At the commissary of police, he was severely beaten by the gendarmes. Bruised, aching in every limb he was thrown into a cell. That night his father, whom he had summoned, sent him a curt note, declaring that he had washed his hands of the whole affair, that Edmond's mother was broken hearted, and that he had engaged a lawyer.

The lawyer was efficient. Blows costing the loss of an eye are usually punished by a minimum of two years in prison. Had the gendarme pushed the charge, Chaptel would have been given the full penalty.

But he appeared in court with a bandage over his eye, and eloquently pleaded for the young man, describing the scene of conflict and frankly admitting that Chaptel had reacted to instinct. He advised acquittal, saying that two wrongs do not make a right, and that the thought of a boy of eighteen in prison would add to his unhappiness. It is to be suspected that a large part of Chaptel Senior's savings contributed to this leniency. Even so, Chaptel was given six months, an extraordinarily mild sentence for such an offense.

At first, the keepers were not gentle, particularly those who indulged in strong drink. They had a habit of waking a prisoner up on a cold night, taking him naked into the yard, and administering various tortures not included in the penal code. Then blue notes, wisely distributed, took effect. Chaptel became a sort of paying guest, loafed about the yard, smoked cigarets, read endless piles of paper-covered books loaned by the head keeper's wife. Stupified by the sugary novels, coughing from too many cigarets, weak from lack of exercise, he was turned out when his time was up.

His first ordeal was the home-coming; the tongue lashing his father had held in reserve, his mother aged ten years in six months, the savings of twenty years dented beyond recovery.

When he attempted to join his former friends in the café, they turned away, after explaining that they did not approve of the way he had behaved in court-room and jail. He should have been more defiant, should have scorned to accept the gendarme's pity. Chaptel bitterly retorted that none of the talkers had offered to come forward and take the blame.

After a year, things settled down to routine again. Chaptel recalled his prison term merely as a sort of bad dream of utter boredom. He avoided looking in the windows of newspaper stores for fear he would see the mawkish novels by the authors he had perused. When stew was on the table at home, he did not eat. That was all. In the shop, the nickname of "convict" playfully applied to him on his return, was forgotten, He fondled cylinders and levers with his greasy hands, whistled and was happy.

When the time approached for his military service, he sought out the probable garrison to inform himself as to the amusements to be obtained. He even thought of enlisting in the marines for the opportunity of seeing foreign lands.

The notice that he was to report to the First Battalion of African Light Infantry came as a shock. He investigated and found there was no way to escape the ordeal.

And so he now found himself in Ain Saffra. Here also, his father was to send him a few francs each month for his minor comforts.

DUVAL occasionally produced a money order for a small sum from an uncertain source. Together they went to the Zgag Chergui, East Street, to an Arab Café, where they smoked, and drank thick coffee out of metal cups, sprawling on clean mats, forgetting for the time the discomforts of barracks.

Of his life previous to his arrival in the battalion, Duval spoke little. That he was from Paris could not be concealed. His accent, his mannerisms were ample proof. Why he had gone to prison, Chaptel never could learn. Of the penitentiary, Duval could, and would speak.

He spun long yarns, of terrific labor under the sun, of freezingly cold nights, of beatings by sergeants in charge of the camp. *Biribi*, as the place was nicknamed, was hell. The guards were native *tirailleurs*, greedy, vicious. Unless bribed, they made one's life a burden. If their liking could be obtained, however, many privileges were acquired. They permitted loafing on a task for the small price of two or three cigarets. For a half a pound of sugar they allowed their charges to go to the nearest village after the pastimes the place afforded.

As he had served twenty-one months in the battalion before his condemnation to the penitentiary in the hills, he knew the tricks. Without him Chaptel would have spent half that first week in the guard house for dingy buttons and unclean arms. It is no unusual thing for the veterans to make a "mistake" when called for inspection, shift rifles on the rack and cause the recruit to be sent to confinement and the extra drill squad. Duval met this danger, by tying to his piece various metallic ornaments, distinguishable to the touch—a coat button, a shoe lace. Chaptel imitated him and attained the specklessness required by regulations.

They made plans to enter into business when their time was served. Duval, getting out earlier, would look around Paris. He said he was tired of the queer life he had been leading, that he wanted to be a solid citizen. His girl, the preferred one among many, was willing to marry him. She must be sincere, for his friends in Paris wrote him concerning her. She was working as a seamstress.

"You wait, Chaptel! Ten years from now we'll be laughing at this bunch down here!"

"I hope so." Chaptel produced a newspaper, pointed out items of interest. "The aeroplane is being perfected, Duval. That's what I want to do. In ten or twelve years it will be as universal as the automobile is today."

"Bicycles and autos will do for me!"

THERE were traits in Duval's character that worried Chaptel. He was a bully to other recruits, and even held the older men in subjection. Chaptel had seen him suddenly leap forward and almost twist a comrade's arm out of the socket. In answer to Chaptel's remonstrance, he grinned:

"Those pigs! If a fellow didn't keep them at respectful distance, life wouldn't be bearable!"

As for Sergeant Marietti, Duval said that he was craftily biding his time, that his almost friendly manner was a blanket for his hatred. The non-com. had stool pigeons in the dormitory. Duval, before going to bed each night, and many times during the day, inspected his blankets and advised Chaptel to do the same. On three occasions they found money concealed in the folds of the bedding. Marietti broke in abruptly, declared that some one had complained of being robbed and searched the beds. Duval, who had discovered the men in the sergeant's game, had replanted the silver where it would backfire.

Smilingly, he underwent the investigation.

"Not this time, Sergeant. You missed the last train!"

"Good, good. I didn't suspect you, Duval. But I have to do my duty."

"Why should I steal, with only sixty days to serve?"

"That's right. You're almost through, aren't you. I'm glad for you."

"I'll send you postal cards from Paris."

"Thanks."

And the search passed on.

The major was never once known to lift a punishment. Several of the more gullible recruits reported episodes at the battalion office. Invariable result: They had their sentence doubled. The oldest axiom is that the superior is always right; the foundation and mainstay of discipline.

One afternoon Chaptel was on duty while Duval was free. He had stated that he would go to the post office, as money-orders were due. At the six o'clock roll call, he was still missing. He returned at eleven to get his blankets, preliminary to entering the guard house for having outstayed his leave.

Chaptel awoke.

"Where were you?"

"All over."

"You've been on a souse." Chaptel accused, smelling the unmistakable odor of absinthe.

"Yes, but I couldn't get drunk."

"You'll get pulled in for another five years if you keep on. You told me yourself the stuff made you crazy."

"What the —— do I care? Five years more or less——"

Chaptel sat up.

"What's wrong?"

"I got a letter. My woman——"

"Sick?"

Duval laughed.

"No. Rich guy. And me with only sixty days more to serve. She had waited seven years, nearly. Can you understand that?"

"No. Forget it and find another one," Chaptel advised, lying back and pulling up the blankets.

Duval did not appear to him to be a man who would allow flowery sentiment to overwhelm his common sense.

"You don't understand. It wasn't the woman I wanted. It's the person who had faith in me, waited all that time."

"Getting yourself into trouble won't help any. Trot to the guard house, sober up and pull your stretch to the end like a little lamb."

"You may be right."

Marietti's voice came from the outside—

"Duval, are you coming tonight, or must I wait until tomorrow?"

"Right away, Sergeant!"

Duval bent close to Chaptel:

"Maybe, if I could get away tonight—reach Paris—there might be a chance. The man is from some small dump—and is buying her things, furniture, dresses, in Paris—so she'll follow him to the old home town. She's getting her price, all right! My friends tell me everything in the letter, I——"

"Don't be a fool Duval!"

Marietti, bearing a lantern, followed by two men under arms came into the vast room. The sound of his hobnailed boots on the floor awoke many of the sleepers. Speculative murmurs arose.

"Get a move on, or I'll double what I've handed you!"

"Yes, Sergeant."

Holding his blankets under one arm, Duval took his place between the armed men, and left.

Chaptel heard Marietti chuckle, as he

gained the door. The private on the bed next to Duval's got up and followed the sergeant. There was a whispered conversation at the far end of the room. Silence. Then Marietti's footsteps receded.

Chaptel waited until the stool-pigeon had gained his bed. For several minutes he struggled against temptation, then impelled by his friendship for Duval he came to a decision. His bayonet hung on a peg at the head of his cot, beneath the plank supporting his belongings. He grasped the scabbard with his left hand and drew the weapon out with precaution. Naked blade in hand, he slipped out of bed, shaking with excitement.

Evidently the stool-pigeon had no conscience, for he had already fallen asleep. Chaptel twined his fingers in his hair and laid the steel against his neck.

A half groan, half curse came from the fellow.

"I won't move; what do you want?"

"What did you tell Marietti?"

"I won't tell."

Chaptel pricked his throat with the point—

"Listen, I won't need much to push it home."

"Push ahead. The others are awake. You'll be shot."

"No one gives a —— what happens to you. They're all sick of you. They wouldn't give me away." Chaptel answered.

If you bleed the swine, kid, I'll treat you on my next money," some one promised.

"Go ahead, Chaptel, push! We'll keep mum."

"Do you hear?" Chaptel asked.

"I told Marietti about—his—woman."

"You did, eh?"

Chaptel straightened up, went to his cot and slid the bayonet into the scabbard. He trembled more than ever. He knew that he had been very near killing a man. Yes, it would not have taken much for Chaptel to have "pushed."

He knew Marietti, and the foul epithets the sergeant could summon, the unbelievably coarse allusions. Given the rich material of Duval's recent misfortune, he would outdo himself. Sober, Duval had enough biting wit to keep the sergeant at bay, but with an absinthe-soaked brain he could not keep calm. In his simple loyalty to Duval, he wished to be at his side, was willing to risk a few days prison for the sake of helping him through the night.

He slipped on trousers and coat and ran out of the building barefooted. The officer of the day was not in the watch room. The orderly murmured something vague concerning rounds. Chaptel surmised that the lieutenant had ducked into town.

What could he do? He thought of the doctor who had proved so understanding, but he was not in the barracks at night. He lived far out, on the other side of town. And Chaptel had no pass to get by the sentries.

He hesitated, then made for the guardhouse.

Before the lockup, the sentry held him off with the bayonet point.

"What do you want'?'

"I want to get in there."

The sentry laughed.

"Some drunk you've got—wanting to break into the guardhouse!"

"Let me in," pleaded Chaptel.

"I'd be willing, if you'd get a sergeant to back you up."

"Where can I find a sergeant?"

"They're all in there. That big fellow, Duval, is soused. They're having fun with him."

"Let me in."

"Listen, friend, you try to sneak by and I'll hand you one with this paper cutter." Then the guard felt it his duty to give advice. "Go to bed and sleep it off."

"Do you mind if I hang around?"

"Go to it, old man. That doesn't concern me."

Chaptel squatted on the ground some distance away. He was miserable. The night was cool, and he shivered. Far off, the twelve strokes of midnight strung out.

"Must be amusing themselves in there," grumbled the sentry. "They forgot to relieve me."

At one o'clock Chaptel was still there, facing the sentry.

A man carrying a lantern passed through the yard. Chaptel entertained a wild hope that it was the lieutenant. He rushed across, to find an orderly.

"The lieutenant's horse has colic," he explained. "Talk about a —— trade that brings you up at all hours."

Chaptel wearily went back to his vigil. Two had just struck, when the sound of loud voices came indistinctly from within the building. Followed thumping, as if men were struggling.

"He's done it!" thought Chaptel.

He attempted to rush by, but the sentry barred the way, brought the butt of his piece against his chest.

"Stop, you fool."

Ten or fifteen minutes later, the door swung open. Chaptel drew back into the shadows. The guard, thinking he had sobered up, was merciful and did not inform Marietti of his presence.

The Corsican paused in the lighted doorway. He was rearranging his tunic collar.

"He tore off two buttons," he remarked. "It was lucky I thought of having you fellows handy. I would have been choked, sure as death."

"He held out long, didn't he?" remarked another non-com. "I thought he'd burst, he was swelling so much. The last thing you said was a good one, though, Marietti," he laughed, and repeated the sentence. "He looked as if you had torn his liver out."

"He's a bad egg," agreed Marietti. "I thought he was going to hold out all night. But he's good for a court martial now. Look at the scratches on my neck—five years—five years—I'll stick around here until he gets back and get him another five."

"What did he do to you, Marietti? I forgot to ask."

"He said my nose was twisted, in front of all the other scum."

"It is," laughed the other.

"Perhaps," Marrietti assented. "But to have an equal say it, or that apache—well, there's a difference."

Not quite comprehending, dazed and cold, Chaptel went back to bed.

AS MARIETTI had taken the precaution to have four non-coms with him, witnesses against Duval were not lacking. Chaptel, of course, could not get into the rooms when the court martial was held. Perhaps fearing that the truth would come out, were Chaptel allowed to speak, Marietti sent him to the guardhouse on the morning of the event and kept him there throughout the trial, which did not last long.

Chaptel, hoping to obtain an interview with the doctor and inform him of the real fact, feigned sickness. Marietti was not deceived. He came with three men whom he trusted, closed the door of the cell behind him and proceeded to manhandle Chaptel. Knowing that the sergeant was acting without orders, that he would not dare make the episode public, Chaptel fought back as long as he was able. It took the combined efforts of the three men to stretch him on his cot. One man sat across his legs, another on his head holding his wrists. Marietti then unbuckled his belt and flogged him.

Bleeding, heartbroken more from the raging helplessness than from the pain of the blows, Chaptel finally ceased to struggle, accepted the beating, and even pleaded for mercy, as Marietti demanded.

"You'll stay here for a couple of weeks until you get better," the sergeant declared. "I know your tricks."

In two weeks, when Chaptel was released, he learned that Duval had been condemned to *Biribi* for five years.

He went straight to the doctor, told his story, not admitting a detail.

"Sorry—the decision against Duval is irrevocable," the doctor informed him. "You must admit it was somewhat his fault. He deliberately incurred the sergeant's resentment."

"What about me?"

"You were not seriously hurt. In any case, you have no witnesses. Marietti could easily make it seem that you attacked him. The major thinks highly of him."

"What do you think of it yourself, Doctor?"

"I?" the doctor smiled. "I don't know just what to think. You seem of different breed from the lying brood here. But just the same you told me you coaxed Marietti's informer. How did you do it? With your bayonet?"

"Oh, you know that?"

"Marietti told me. From an aloof standpoint, I disapprove of informers. From the viewpoint of the officer, interested only in the good of the whole, I am compelled to realize the usefulness of the stool-pigeon. Many a murder has been prevented through him."

"I'm sure there must be a way to get justice, Doctor. Can't you advise me? Shall I go to the major?"

"Frankly, I wouldn't advise you to do so. He has little sympathy with Duval, who came here with a bad record and has lived up to it. Did you know that he narrowly escaped the guillotine, before coming here?"

"No, sir."

"He was involved in the murder of an old woman. No positive proof of guilt could be obtained. That alone saved him. Do you know what they nickname him in barracks, and at the penitentiary? *Le Couperet*—the Slicer."

"I never heard that name applied to him."

"He doesn't like it. And you're his friend. They woudn't dare use it before you. Do you remember what I told you? To keep clear? You disregarded my advice. Think it over."

The doctor turned and set to work on the papers before him.

"Doctor—" faltered Chaptel.

"Get out! If every private wasted as much of my time as you do, when would I do anything?"

Chaptel joined his heels, saluted, and left.

He felt that he was no match for the experienced Marietti, who had told just enough to the doctor to forestall an investigation.

Whether, in spite of his pretended distrust, the doctor had warned Marietti to leave Chaptel alone, or the sergeant was satisfied with what he had thus far accomplished, he changed utterly in behavior toward the private. Generally, he ignored him, and when he did notice him it was to show a certain degree of kindness. Chaptel applied for leave until midnight, some time later, and it was granted.

Ain Aaffra boasted several *beuglants*—bellowers, music-halls frequented by the troopers. As a rule, the privates occupied the outer tables, the non-coms. were placed nearer the stage, while the officers had front reserved seats. The entertainment was not high class. Antiquated ladies, veterans of every small town in France, performed dances and sang.

The officers absorbed alcohols of various description and fancy cocktails. The sergeants drank beer. The privates drank wine. A specially concocted drink cost forty to fifty centimes, a glass of beer twenty, while the wine imbibed by the troopers sold for twenty-five centimes a liter, or approximately ten centimes a glass. Two different brands of absinthe existed: One for officers and non-coms., one for the privates. For ten centimes, a private could buy a glass. For less than a franc, complete oblivion. Cheap at the price, many considered.

Chaptel had never been a hard drinker. One or two glasses of wine, seldom three. But this particular night, having no one to talk to, and feeling very lonely, the mechanical gestures were repeated; sliding a copper coin across the table, lifting the glass—first wine, then absinthe.

At first the songs bored him. Gradually he found himself laughing. Then he beat the rhythm on the table top and sang the chorus. The painted ladies he had scorned at first now seemed as light as fairies, prancing on soft springy fields. Through the alcoholic haze, they were deified. A fat, good-natured blonde performer kindled adoration in his heart.

"She's beautiful!" he muttered.

He made such a disturbance applauding that Marietti, seated with a group of friends, turned around and saw him. The sergeant laughed and nodded. Grateful for the small recognition, Chaptel stood up and saluted. Resuming his seat, he stared about him complacently, and announced to the universe in general and to the waiter in particular—

"You see—he knows me."

Marietti knew him—he was the only one in this strange place, in this stranger country, who had ever nodded to him. Not a bad man, Marietti. A little rough, perhaps; yes, a little rough. But men with rough exteriors often had kind hearts. Marietti had a kind heart. Had he not recommended him, Chaptel, for leave tonight?

He wondered: Why had he ever disliked Marietti?

Oh, he had it. Marietti had "kidded" Duval into striking him, and then had him sent to the hills. Duval, who was his friend. Was that right?

His feelings shifted with the elusiveness of smoke. One moment, he worshiped Marietti. The next he hated him. Something was needed to crystallize in his sodden brain one of the two emotions, admiration or hatred.

The waiter, a stocky Spaniard, touched him on the shoulder.

"Friends of yours outside."

"Friends?"

Chaptel could think of no friends.

"They must be," the waiter insisted. "They gave me this to tell you they wanted to speak to you."

He exhibited a fifty centime piece in his palm.

Gravely Chaptel placed another beside it.

"Thank you. I will go."

HE DODGED a table, skirted another by a fraction of an inch and gained the open door. The cooler air swept his face. It was delicious to breathe freely, after the smoky hall. Chaptel forgot his mission, leaned against the wall, smoking.

Two civilians, standing not far off, eyed him speculatively for a few minutes. Vaguely annoyed, Chaptel returned the stare. One of the men was long and thin, and the other short and thin. Their faces were familiar, yet he knew he had never seen them before. He reasoned; the stamp of the prison he recognized—they had sometime been battalion men.

At length the smaller man made up his mind and came forward diffidently.

"Are you Chaptel?"

"Yes; what do you want?"

"Our names don't matter. Call me Charles, if you want. We're friends of Duval."

"He's at the Pen."

"We know. He wrote us all about it. We came down to execute Marietti."

"No joke?"

The short man smiled joyously.

"Do I look like a joke? Did we come from Paris for a joke? Do we risk our being recognized—we both served here—for a joke?"

"What do you want me to do?" asked Chaptel.

"Help us. Marietti was not our sergeant. We don't know who he is. You don't need to do anything more. Describe him, tell us where he hangs out."

Chaptel laid a finger across his lips importantly.

"Surprize," he whispered.

"He's drunk," the man who called himself Charles informed the other. "Can't get anything out of him."

"I'm not," warmly protested Chaptel. "I have a surprize. Look in there through the doors. See that red-faced striper between the Quarter-Master Sergeant of Zouaves and the guy with the red whiskers? You know who that is? Ah—ah—that is Marietti."

"Enough said. Now get back to barracks. You'll need an alibi."

"Do you think I'm a quitter? Duval was my friend," Chaptel grumbled. "I'll beat him up, too. He beat me up."

"Listen," advised Charles. "This will be more than a beating. You'll get blamed for it unless some one saw you elsewhere at the time."

"What do I care?"

"Get some sense, Chaptel. The other guy and I can't put this off. We came in on the quiet, we can get away tonight on the quiet. If we wait we'll be pinched. You've done your share. Beat it."

"What do you think I am!"

Charles grasped him by the arm, pulled him along the sidewalk away from the lights of the café. The other man followed silently. He did not say a word. His long face, quiet eyes, almost gentle smile, frightened Chaptel.

"What does he keep his hand in his pocket for?" he asked.

"Shut up. Tell us what you know. Don't ask questions. Where does the sergeant go from here usually?"

"Where? Don't make me laugh!" Chaptel, recalling tales of the non-com.'s behavior outside barracks, mentioned an address in the Arab quarter. "I'll take you there."

"We know the place."

"I'll show you," Chaptel insisted.

Charles spoke to the other in a low voice. The tall man shrugged.

"It's his funeral," he said, speaking for the first time. "Everything is arranged for tonight. We couldn't get away with it tomorrow. I, for one, will not go back without doing what I said I'd do."

"All right, Chaptel," Charles concluded. "Lead on."

As they walked he explained.

"Duval, the two of us, and some others—we're together; the fingers of one hand. Duval has done little jobs for us. He wrote that he'd consider it even if we did up Marietti in style. Between pals, that sort of thing can't be refused."

"No," agreed Chaptel, heartily. "Duval is a fine fellow."

"Uh—not always. When his selfishness is in play, he knows no friend. But we want him back sometime. He hasn't an equal for certain jobs."

"Have you arranged for your getaway?" Chaptel asked.

His brain was clearing, and he was speculating for the first time on the consequences of tonight's "job."

"Didn't any one see you get into town?"

"No. And no one will think this is an outside job. They'll question the privates.

Tomorrow is Friday, market day. We came in with a bunch of Spaniards, Italians and Arabs. As soon as we finish we'll hop a freight train—the depot isn't well watched, anyway—and be far from here by morning. We have return tickets from a certain place to Algiers. In that place I have business, real business. I joined the useful to the agreeable on this trip, and got the representation of a wine firm. He—" Charles jerked a thumb over his shoulder toward the silent partner—"is my assistant. See?"

◆

IN A few minutes, the trio had left the strictly European part of Ain Saffra, and were making their way through the narrow streets of the town, bound for the "special quarter." It was the custom of Marietti to end his evenings of liberty here, watching the Ouled Nails dancing girls do the *Danse du ventre*. He and a few dilettantes of his ilk were noted frequenters of a celebrated establishment, reputed to offer the prettiest representatives of the art. As a fortunate coincidence, Marrietti was rich tonight, soon after pay day. He could not fail to turn his steps toward hospitable portals.

When the rhythmical tread of the patrols drew near, Charles would hurry to shelter. At last they halted within the shadow of a door, their backs glued against the panel of wood. Guttural singing from a house, three doors away, betrayed the place where Marietti was known to go.

The tall man brought his hand out of the coat pocket. Came a metallic sound. Charles also was fumbling with metal objects.

"American punch," he volunteered, which meant "brass-knuckles."

"And what's he got?" Chaptel asked, referring to the other.

"A sticker. Eh, Bibi, show this boy."

Bibi, at last identified, handed his knife to Chaptel, who felt the blade in the darkness. It was a full seven inches, sharp as a razor. In the hands of a resolute man it was a fearsome weapon. The click Chaptel had heard was the powerful spring opening.

Had Bibi been about to use a pistol, had Charles frankly carried a club, Chaptel might not have been brought to his senses. But the typical apache weapons shocked and frightened him. He had always dreaded the thought of a knife wound, imagining the sharp pain if the blade were driven into the pit of the stomach. He would have faced a gun without shrinking, but would have fled from a knife.

"You're going to—hit him—with those?"

"Of course not. We're merely playing!" scoffed Charles.

"You'll kill him!"

"That's what!"

"I won't have anything to do with it. I thought you'd beat him up, that's all."

"Cold feet? I don't blame you. We'll get away. They'll pinch you. You're ripe for the firing squad. We tried to tell you, but——"

"I must go."

"No one's keeping you here. By the way, if any one asks you about us, it'll be healthier to know nothing, eh?"

"All right."

Without another word, Chaptel hurried away.

The walk and the cold air had sobered him. He was disgusted with himself. Knifing an unsuspecting man, regardless of what that man had done, was dirty. The doctor had been right—he was sinking.

"I swear never to mix with them again," he told himself as he ran, "if I get out of this safe."

He prayed that Marietti would change his mind, and return dutifully to barracks. Failing that, he hoped that he himself would make the barracks before the time of the attack. He retained enough calm to hide from patrols. Once, he bumped against an elderly native, who turned and cursed him, shaking a stick in his direction. Chaptel instinctively averted his face.

Out of breath, he hid in another doorway. No sooner had he done so than he saw the glint of brass buttons down the street, he glimpsed Marietti's face as he passed beneath a lamp. The sergeant was alone, walking at his usual gait. He passed six feet from Chaptel, but did not appear to notice him. He was whistling gaily, one of the late songs. Chaptel decided to stop him and warn him. But the sergeant disappeared from view, and he feared to run after him. Marietti was quite capable of having him imprisoned, perhaps sent to the "pen," regardless of the warning.

Guardedly, Chaptel risked himself in the open once more, and walked with all the dignity he could command toward the barracks, which he found himself calling "home," so much did he desire to be safe within the friendly walls.

Suddenly he halted, breathing hard. From behind had come three pistol shots in quick succession. He wondered if they were connected with the sergeant and the two gentlemen waiting there. When shouts followed the shots, he hurried on. He was young and boasted good lungs. Moreover he was in danger. He tore down the streets at a mad pace, as luck would have it, straight into a patrol rushing toward the disturbance.

With alacrity, he shortened his stride, saluted the non-com. in command, and effaced himself with a polite gesture to allow the six men to pass. His ruse failed.

"You come with us, my friend," suggested the patrol commander. "I heard you running."

"I was in a hurry to get back before roll call," protested Chaptel.

"Either your pass calls for liberty until ten o'clock and you're overdue already, or it calls for midnight, which gives you an hour to kill," the sergeant pointed out logically. "There's queer goings on here tonight."

Nothing to do but retrace his steps under escort. He shuffled miserably between two privates of Zouaves. They did nothing to ease Chaptel's mind. Between the Zouaves and the *joyeux*, as the battalion men are called, there was little love lost.

"Pretty head for the guillotine," remarked one.

The patrol now had to push its way through a shouting swarm of natives, who had rushed out with torches toward the scene of the shooting.

Marietti was the center of an excited group of non-coms. from the café. The sergeant was rearranging his tunic. Under his left eye the beginning of a "mouse" was showing, his cheek was lacerated, bleeding. One leg of his trousers was ripped open, and a friend was bandaging a cut, doubtless from the knife wielded by Bibi.

Charles was a few feet away, face down. Bibi was seated, limp, against the wall. His head hung down on his chest, and Chaptel knew that he would be silent for all eternity. Strangely enough, his feeling was one of deep admiration for Marietti. Taken by surprize, the sergeant had dropped two men in three shots. For the first time Chaptel understood how he had earned the medals he wore. Marietti was a brute, but he was also a fighter and a cool-headed soldier.

The commander of the patrol made inquiries.

"As I came close to the café," Marietti narrated, "those two jumped out at me. The tall one was nearest, and brought down his knife. I leaped back, he fell over, and instead of stabbing me in the stomach, he ripped my leg open. I lowered my gun and shot him through the back. While he was doing it, the short fellow punched me in the face with that contraption of his. I saw thirty candles, for a moment! If he had kept after me, I'd have gone down. But the one shot had scared him, and he ran away. I missed him with one shot, got him with the second."

Thunder!" the patrol leader approved. "That was fine work." He laughed softly. "I nabbed one of your birds running away, on the chance he was mixed in it. But I guess he was too far from here. I'll let him go."

Chaptel, released by the Zouaves, was making for the open streets when Marietti halted him.

"Stick around, Chaptel. You're under arrest."

"Why?"

"For investigation." Marietti turned and explained to the listeners. "I saw this fellow hiding in a doorway down below. He thought he was hidden, but the light shone on his buttons."

Chaptel became aware that the brass fasteners on his coat must in fact have glinted as brilliantly as those of the sergeant.

Marietti went on:

"That's why I was on guard when these fellows made for me. I told myself, 'Marietti, that fellow hasn't got a clean conscience.' I was glad I had my gun. The ——! With a revolver, I fear nobody. I was in the Tonking, I was."

"You're going back with this man?" the patrol commander asked.

"No. Send him back. As for me, I allow nothing to interfere with my pleasure. Come on, you fellows, I treat. I must show my gratitude to Heaven, mustn't I?"

THE Chaptel case brought novelty into the monotous routine of the court martial.

The ordinary case of insults, slapped sergeants, punched corporals, the tedious recitals of "voluntary destruction of government property," sank into the background. Here was an attemped assassination, in which two outsiders figured. Both Charles and Bibi had been identified as former members of the battalion. But it was soon decided that they had not acted in a personal quarrel, for neither had been under Marietti, or even in touch with him during his time of service.

A civilian lawyer volunteered to defend Chaptel. He argued long with Chaptel in an attempt to make the private tell the complete story; how he had come to know Charles and Bibi. Chaptel's criminal record had taken place in Eastern France, far from the haunts of the apaches. Yet, the waiter at the music hall declared that they had specifically asked for him, had even pointed him out.

Chaptel refused to talk, not because of his loyalty to Duval, which had been considerably lessened in view of recently acquired knowledge, but the fear that there might exist more members of the Duval-Charles-Bibi gang. Judging from experience, they were a resolute bunch, and a man who crossed them was not likely to enjoy a long life of unmarred happiness. After a little thought it became clear to him how the two strangers had picked him up out in the café. On his first outing with Duval, they had gone to a photographer to procure pictures, pictures which were sent to Duval's girl.

Under strict application of military code, Chaptel was in serious danger of being shot. His lawyer, however, assured him that he could save him, but did not guarantee to get him off lightly, unless he would make a clean breast of everything.

So Chaptel was not in the best of spirits when he faced the judges.

The doctor testified for him, pleaded that even a young man of fine character could be led astray, that he was sure there was more to the case than appeared on the surface. His most damaging evidence was the fact that Chaptel had come to him on behalf of Duval, and that Marietti had been the means of sending Duval to the public works.

Marietti, coming forward to testify, with his swollen eye, reminded Chaptel forcibly of the gendarme in France. The Corsican was deeply embarrassed. At ease before a crowd of forty privates, the glittering row of officers dazed him. It was several minutes before his sentences were coherent. The poor fellow had been in the army so long, respected rank so deeply, so sincerely that he faced his superiors with the same humility the battalion men faced him.

"Sacred Thunder, Sergeant! Speak clearly!"

The major, under whom Marietti had served for many years, put him at ease.

The familiar words gave Marietti a fashion of landmark in his maze of statements. He launched out boldly, used mild curses—as long as the major used them, he could—described the attack and his defense in much the same way he had spoken to the crowd on the night in question. He told of seeing Chaptel, of his hunch that something was wrong.

When he seemed through with his story, the major indicated that he was at liberty to leave the stand, but the sergeant lifted his hand for permission to go on.

"It ain't my business," he said, "to tell messieurs the officers what to do in a case like this. But I sort of feel, that having been as you might say, the center of the trouble, having my leg ripped open and my face punched, I know more about this than most."

He paused respectfully to permit the officers to end their laughter, looking about him to see the cause, then went on:

"There's not a man knows the fellows I command, better than I. I can tell whether they're good or bad. Now, this young one here today, he's all right."

Chaptel started. This was strange talk from Marietti.

"He's a good man. I mistook him at first for a bad egg. He was hanging out with Duval. That's saying a lot. Nobody's asking me to give my ideas here, but maybe they're good. I think this Duval's at the bottom of the whole business. Chaptel is a different breed. He wouldn't knife a man."

Chaptel stood up.

"I wouldn't. I was somewhat drunk. I thought they wanted to beat you up, that's all."

The waiter's testimony of having delivered a message to Chaptel had established beyond doubt his acquaintance with the would-be murderers.

"Beat me up! That's enough!" Marietti remarked. "I had to beat Chaptel up once, when he wanted to make a lot of fuss over Duval."

"It's against regulations to strike a man," the major chided.

"There's lots of things against regulations.

Tying a man to a tree when a tiger is howling around—that's not printed in regulations." Marietti laughed softly. "That was done in Indo-China, to scare some of the toughs into being good boys."

"Active service—necessity," snapped the major who evidently knew who was reponsible for the punishment just mentioned.

"Yes, major. What I mean to say is: Don't be hard on Chaptel. He licked the *costaud*—strong guy—of the room he's in, and refused to take graft. That shows he doesn't belong here."

"The court will consider. You may go, Sergeant."

Marietti saluted, gave an understanding wink to Chaptel, and made room for the next witness, the Zouave non-com., who had commanded the patrol. He brought no new light on the subject, took up much time narrating just what places he had visited, and was excused before he had told ought concerning Chaptel.

The captain representing the army got to his feet. Patently, he didn't care about the job. He contented himself with saying that in his opinion, Chaptel was a potential murderer and should be given the extreme penalty within the power of the court. The effect of his brief utterance was considerably lessened by the casual way in which he uttered it.

Followed a painful ordeal for Chaptel.

His lawyer stood, waved his ample black sleeves, became pitiful, animated, sad, happy in turn, painting the home life of the prisoner until the first misstep. He brought the accused man's mother into play, an honorable father who had never been reproached for a dishonest action. Chaptel wished he would stop. He was marring the effect of Marietti's straight-forward speech.

When the lawyer at last sat down every one in the room was utterly bored.

The military judges conferred briefly, and the major arose.

"The court martial condemns the accused Edmond Chaptel, to five years public works."

"Only five years!" the lawyer said jubilantly. "I gripped them!"

ARTICLE two of the regulations governing the military penitentiaries of the French Republic, reads as follows:

> "The efforts of the various military authorities must tend toward the moral reform of the prisoners.
>
> "It is therefore of prime importance that they be classified according to the cause of their imprisonment and of their antecedents.
>
> "They will be separated in as complete a fashion as the organization will allow, into classes: Those condemned for crimes or misdemeanors covered by the ordinary penal laws, and those condemned for solely military crimes. Moreover, in each of those classes, there will be an attempt to isolate the second offenders from the others.
>
> "The prisoners will be managed so as to separate the condemned men from those awaiting trial; etc., etc."

When a private breaks sacred regulation he is severely punished, unless five years labor for a nervous reflex might be considered a mild reproval. The authorities themselves smashed the rules with impunity. In the penitentiaries the sheep are mingled with the goats. As for moral reform and a special department for first offenders, the mere thought would send the non-coms. into spasms of laughter. To them the convict is one sort, indivisible. They reason with unshakable logic that the man must be no good in the first place, or he would not have come under their supervision.

Chaptel was sent, with a motley assortment of other prisoners, to a mountain camp, beyond Ain ben Khelil, in western Algeria, close to the Moroccan frontier. The detachment was guarded by three mounted gendarmes, good-natured, middle-aged men, who dug into their pockets at times to buy drinks for the poorest of the group.

Humanity from this unexpected source touched Chaptel, and he resolved that he would accept his lesson meekly, and do nothing to extend his term. He dare not think over much on the brutal knowledge that his two years had suddenly stretched into seven. After five years in the penitentiary, he would be sent back to Ain Saffra to finish his "regular" term of service, for the months and years in criminal camp count for nothing as far as the army is concerned.

In truth, he rather enjoyed the long hike over the mountain trails. The scenery was awe-inspiring, more rugged, more savage even than his home hills of Jura. The natives, no longer pure Arabs, but Berbers interested him. He was surprized to find among them many points of resemblance to the French mountaineers. The same stolid patience and stocky build. They evidenced far less curiosity than his own people would have shown before a convoy of convicts. They were not unkind, and did not expect more pay for their food from the prisoners than from free men.

Ain ben Khelil, he was not allowed to see. As a private of the African Battalion, he had enjoyed some liberty. As a convict, of course, he could expect none. The camp constructed on a small plateau, consisted of a half dozen huts, residences of the non-coms. in charge, and fifteen huge tents, the marabout tents in which the prisoners lived.

The sergeant-major in command counted the new arrivals, handed a signed receipt to the gendarmes, who bade their unfortunate companions farewell and took the road southeast.

It had been late in the afternoon when the new men reached camp. The tents were empty, for the occupants were at work on the road. Of what use the road in this region visited by no one, where the existing paths were sufficient to the small commerce of the natives, Chaptel could not see. Perhaps it was a far-sighted provision for the occupation of Morocco.

The prisoners were assigned to different tents. Chaptel drew number five, near the outer enclosure of spiny bushes. As he marched toward it, he perceived, perched high on a lumber scaffold, a *Turco*—Algerian Tirailleur—the principal sentry, overlooking from this vantage point the entire camp. Day and night the tower was occupied by a man with a loaded rifle. Chaptel began to understand why escape was said to be impossible. Any man leaving the tents would be visible at some point of his journey to the open country.

Once inside the tent, Chaptel reeled back before the stench. Occupied by hopeless men, most of them born to filth, the surface cleanliness Chaptel had learned to associate with the army was missing. The place reeked of sweat and unmentionable odors, dominated by the pungency of tallow and oil, the latter no doubt arising from the clandestine candles and lamps used by the prisoners at night.

"You stay here until I tell you to come out," the sergeant suggested.

"Yes, Sergeant."

They were four, assigned to this tent. One of the men brought out a greasy pack of cards. Cigarets were lighted, and the haze of cheap tobacco added to the other odors. When a match was struck, it seemed that the flame found it difficult to blaze in the thick air, fluttering in the fog like a will o' the wisp.

At half past six, the prisoners returned from the road, looking like a procession of fantoms, in long vizored caps and baggy gray uniforms.

They did not address as much as a glance at the newcomers, but sank fully dressed on their bedding. Many removed their shoes. The card game had ceased with the failing light, but the four clung together as if to seek protection from the others, the veterans.

The latest comer made for the group, kicked the nearest man in the back, slapped another.

"Out of my way, scum!"

This was undoubtedly the *costaud*, the big boss, the man who collected his half on the money and the food.

The way cleared he struck a match, lighted a cigaret. Chaptel read the number across his left breast: 2769. Sullen resentment filled his heart. Not content with being tortured by the sergeants, who at least had the excuse of self-righteousness, the prisoners allowed one of their number to tyrannize over them within the tents. He knew that sooner or later he would come to blows with the fellow. Not so much to save his money or his belongings, but to preserve the lurking spark of self-respect that still existed within him. He would not repeat here his mistake of the Ain Saffra barracks and join a clique. It would be hard to play a lone hand for five years.

"Wine!" called the *costaud*. "Who has wine?"

"Here."

Some one got up in the obscurity, guided himself, fumbling, to the leader.

Chaptel heard the gulps as the liquid left the bottle.

For several minutes, Chaptel had been scratching. The tent had inhabitants not mentioned in the official roster.

A low laugh came from the next pile of blankets.

"Fresh meat! We'll have a little rest now until you four new ones ripen."

"Cooties?"

"You'd call them that, I guess. But they're as large as rats, some of them! So big you can tell them apart!"

"Isn't anything done against them?"

"They issued powder at one time. But these ones seem to thrive on it. You see they're foreigners."

"What?"

"We had the usual kind until six months ago. Then two Italians came up from the Foreign Legion, and we got these. They don't answer to usual treatment at all, at all." The man yawned. "I'd go to sleep but I've got to get them out of Duval's shirt as soon as it's safe to make a light."

"Achille Duval?"

"Don't know his first name. 2769." The man added in a whisper, "The Slicer."

"Where is he?"

"Over there, drinking."

"Is that him? I know him."

"I didn't say anything against him," the unseen man went on hurriedly. "I just thought you might know him better by his nickname."

Chaptel reassured him.

After a while he laughed. No need for him to fight Duval!

Eagerly he made his way toward the *costaud*.

"Hello, Achille!"

"Who's that speaking?"

"Me, Edmond."

"When did you come? This afternoon? I hope it wasn't you I kicked." Duval reached out with both hands and drew Chaptel close. "You poor kid! Did they railroad you up here, too?"

"I got what was coming to me, all right."

"You wait, Chaptel. That swine, Marietti, will be settled—soon."

Evidently Duval did not know of recent events. The prisoners' sole communication with the battalion was through the new arrivals and he, Chaptel, had come with the first batch. He told the Slicer of the attempt on Marietti's life, of the sergeant's resistance, of the death of Charles and Bibi. Duval trembled, swore. His first thought, however was of himself.

"You didn't squeal?"

"No."

"You're a good kid." Duval patted him affectionately on the back. "Don't fret, Marietti will get his yet."

"He's a decent sort—he testified for me at the trial."

"He's double-faced. He hoped you'd be acquitted. Then he'd have asked you to tell on the rest. That's the way he gets his informers."

Chaptel was elated. This was a marvelous stroke of luck, to find Duval in the penitentiary already enthroned as leader. He really liked him immensely, and talking with him soon destroyed his late suspicion that Duval might not be a safe companion.

"Listen, kid," Duval said. "You're in for a hard time tonight. I can't help you either."

"What is it?"

"The sergeants will initiate you. Bichet, the big boss of this dump, usually tries to break your nerve the first evening. He has a half dozen different ways. He hung me by the thumbs for four hours, to start me right. I think he's crazy."

"Is there any way to make him ease up?"

"None that I know of. You've got to go through with it. One man died last month, a guy from the Foreign Legion who could hardly speak French. Bichet kept after him trying to make him recite some piece without an accent. The poor —— pronounced P like B and B like P. He could control his tongue for one or two words, but before the end of his little speech he was bound to fail. You know how cold the nights get here, or you will know. Well, Bichet kept him naked in the open, then threw him into one of the pits in the ground used as a refrigerator. The guy got pneumonia and croaked."

"Can't some one report him?"

"You know how that goes. The officer leaves you here while the charge is being investigated. Bichet would see that you were not around to speak when the time came. Shot trying to get away, that's what happens. And the *tirailleurs* of the guard would lie for him."

Chaptel tried to accept with fortitude the prospect of torture. Strangely enough he forgot the unpleasant future before a nearer problem.

"When do we eat?"

"Tomorrow at ten. We had our panikin of soup at five. You new fellows get nothing. It's that much saved, Bichet says."

"I'm hungry."

"Some one may have a crust left. I'll ask."

But Chaptel was unwilling to deprive another of his hoarded provisions, and he was also reluctant to use Duval's power for his own comfort.

"Don't bother. I can stand it."

He became aware of a grinding noise within the tent, as of metal being scraped against stone.

"What's that, Duval?"

"Some one making a knife."

"A knife?"

"Didn't they take your knife away?"

"Yes."

"Well! Now if you want to get along here you've got to keep your rights, and you've got to have a knife. Usually we turn them out of a spoon. They aren't so good, but they'll do the business. Feel this."

Duval placed the knife in Chaptel's hand. Long grinding against hard stones had given it a double edge and a point as keen as a razor.

"One through the guts, and your fellow says nothing more about wind or weather," proclaimed the Slicer.

"Did you ever use this?"

"No. That's the new one I made since coming up here. Before, I had one that confessed four fellows."

"You killed four men, Achille?"

"It was either them or me, and I preferred it to be them. Catch on? You'll come to it some time, kid," Duval lowered his voice. "You think being the *costaud* means only a scrap now and then. You're wrong. You've got to keep up your end or you'd be done for. If some fellow licked me, then some other fool who was sore at me would do me up. Even now, I can never sleep sound. I imagine all the time that some man is crawling toward me with one of these stickers."

Chaptel stirred uneasily.

"Can't you make a light, Duval?"

"Not yet. There's an inspection at nine. What's the matter? Scared? These cattle won't do anything while my eyes are open."

The "cattle" rustled at Duval's words, for he had spoken aloud.

"Is the work hard?" Chaptel changed the subject.

"Not if you know how to get away with it. The two hundred men are divided into gangs, each one under a sergeant. The sergeants go to sleep in the shade. I imitate the sergeants and go to sleep. I'm in good with Messaoud, who has charge of our bunch. He always wakes me up before the sergeant is up and about. You'd laugh the way I get busy breaking stones squatted before a big heap.

"You see each man has got to show what he's done. Well, the others chip in on mine. I'll see that you don't sprain your wrists breaking stones, don't worry. Messaoud trusts me and even lets me go to the village, two, three hours at a time. That dump ain't the boulevards, but it seems good after this ——. I'll take you along."

THE flap closing the tent door was suddenly drawn aside and a man carrying a lantern appeared, a sergeant. Behind him two *Turcos*, Lebel rifle in hand, stood casually.

Holding the lantern high this non-com., one of the gang chiefs, made the round of the tent and counted the men. Duval stood at attention and saluted meekly as did the others.

"The newcomers will follow me," the sergeant said.

"Go, kid, and keep a stiff upper lip," whispered Duval. "Say whatever he wants you to say. Good luck."

He pressed his hand warmly.

The moon was shining outside. In the brilliant light, the hills were beautiful. Chaptel found himself wondering how this aggregation of human misery could exist in this earthly paradise.

Of the four new men, Chaptel was the first to enter the sergeant-major's hut, or rather the hut used as an office. A few chairs, a table, a kerosene lamp hanging from the ceiling—on the chairs, the sergeant-major, Bichet, the other gang-chief, and the youthful sergeant in charge of the establishment's book-keeping department.

Bichet was a man of forty-two or -three of medium height. He wore a goatee, imprecise as to color, mingled red and blond. His eyes were small and of a peculiar hazel shade. His smile was so mild that Chaptel found it hard to imagine him as the perpetrator of the cruelties narrated by Duval.

Like Marietti, he wore the Colonial and Tonking medals and also a large enamel plaque, bestowed by the government of Tunis. He smoked thin cigars with a straw tip, a cheap brand well known to Chaptel. In fact, but for the uniform, he might have been mistaken for a good-natured café-keeper.

Politely, even suavely, he asked the prisoner's name, inquired as to his record. As he spoke he rubbed his feet on the floor, and Chaptel, attracted by the movement, looked down. The planking was stained.

The young sergeant scribbled in a register.

"Number 3039," he announced.

"That's your number, Chaptel. Your new uniform is over there on the shelf. Strip off what you have on."

Chaptel still wore the white fatigue garments of the battalion. He obediently stripped, and turned to go to the shelf.

"Just a minute, my friend," said Bichet.

Chaptel halted, naked.

"Come back here."

The sergeant-major sucked thoughtfully the cigaret tip. He beamed upon Chaptel.

"You have a good education?"

Hoping for a clerical position in the office against all possibilities, Chaptel enumerated his qualifications.

"That's very good. You have good religious instruction, also, I presume? You know your catechism?"

"I think I can remember something of it, Sergeant."

"That's splendid." Bichet smiled happily. "How many persons in God?"

Chaptel hesitated, looked intently at the sergeant-major, then deciding the man was serious, replied—

"There are three persons in God, Sergeant."

"Yes. Who are they?"

"God, the Father——"

Bichet interrupted him violently:

"Wrong! You know no more than the other swine."

He signaled to the *Turcos* standing by the door. The two came in, seized Chaptel. One of the sergeants came forward, fastened two thin cords about Chaptel's thumbs. A system of pulleys was employed to lift him until only his toes touched the floor.

"Will you give me that answer?" asked Bichet.

"I have given the only answer I know, Sergeant."

"You'll find out another before long. Pull, there!"

After fifteen minutes, Bichet patently felt that his repeated questions would never obtain an answer such as he desired. He listened for Chaptel's groans.

"You're calling on the wrong person, Chaptel," he declared. "Who strung you up? Bichet. Who alone has power to release you? Bichet."

"Yes, Sergeant."

"Now that you know who is God in this camp, beg me to let you go!"

Chaptel knew the folly of resisting this blasphemous beast.

"I beg you to let me go, Sergeant."

"Say your piece better than that—as if you were in church."

"I implore you to let me go, Sergeant."

"On your knees? On both knees, you implore me?"

"Yes, Sergeant."

"Fine. I'll let you go. I'm good, I am. But you have committed sacrilege, Chaptel. You didn't know who I was. Do you know now? Who am I?"

The blood was streaming down Chaptel's arms where the cords had cut into the flesh. Every muscle ached with the strain. He was faced by a man obviously demented, very likely drunk judging by the bottles and tin cups on the table. The others were laughing. What could he do?

He gave the desired answer.

Bichet looked at his watch.

"Only twenty-five minutes. You were converted swiftly, 3039. Some, more devoted than you, took seven and even ten nights to see the light. But they all come to it."

Chaptel was released and permitted to sink down in a corner. He was too weary to dress. The next man was brought in. He perceived Chaptel, glanced at the ropes, at the sergeants and began to tremble. He quivered more and more through the preliminaries, and when the *Turcos* approached to grasp him and tie his thumbs, he fell to the floor, foaming at the mouth and kicking right and left.

"Sacred——!" exclaimed Bichet. "An epileptic!"

The sergeants left the room to get water, strangely eager to relieve the sufferer. Perhaps they felt remorseful and afraid before this unforeseen manifestation of a power stronger than theirs.

Writhing and howling the man beat the floor with hands and feet, turned over and over. He had bitten his tongue, and the flecks of foam on chin and chest were blood stained. He was a dreadful sight. Chaptel watched him, fascinated by the horror.

Suddenly, with his face hidden from the *Turcos*, the man grinned at Chaptel quickly, and winked. At least one of the new comers had the intelligence to find a way out. Chaptel chided himself for not having thought of the trick. The sergeants returned, dashed water over the prostrate man, who at last arose to his feet. But at the first question he fell again, a magnificent bit of acting, indeed, so well acted that Chaptel himself doubted his own eyes, doubted that the grin and the wink were not products of his own super-excited brain.

And Bichet was defeated, Bichet gave up.

"Get your clothing and beat it out," he ordered.

The other two were not so fortunate. They stated in due time who ruled the camp, after the same procedure used on Chaptel. This concluded, Bichet harangued them.

"You three are heretics. I have a few others of your sort cooling off outside. You'll join them for the night."

As the trio started to get their clothes, he added:

"Not so fast, boys. You came into the world hairless and naked. You have hair. That's sufficient for an improvement."

Smiling blandly, he led the way. The cold wind that swept the plateau chilled Chaptel immediately. His teeth rattled.

"My —— is cold," said Bichet.

He took them to a pit in the ground, where other naked men were huddled.

"Hop in there."

The first man hesitated, and he pushed him roughly. The next slid in. Chaptel, who had never come to accept close skin contact with others, demurred.

"That's a way to catch a disease," he protested.

"Ah? *Monsieur* is dainty? *Monsieur* wants a private boudoir all to himself? Gentlemen, 3039 wishes a private chamber."

Astonished at this deference to his wishes, Chaptel followed him. The walk had somewhat abated the effect of the cold. The party came to another pit, smaller and deeper than the first one.

"I'll give you a last chance to be good, Chaptel," Bichet suggested. "I want to warn you that with the others you'd be warmer. You can squeeze together and the fellow who is strong enough to get inside the bunch is in soft. What do you say?"

"I'll take this one."

"All right. Get in."

Chaptel slid down on the cold earth, to the moist bottom of the hole.

"How do you find it?"

"The spring is hard and the mattress damp, Sergeant. But it will do."

Bichet leaned over the edge holding the lantern high.

"Do you know who was in there? A fellow who was sent to the hospital today."

Chaptel made as if to leap out, but one of the *Turcos* menaced him with a gun butt. The sergeants left, laughing loudly. And Chaptel was left alone, naked, in the cold hole. Panic stricken at first, he presently saw through the sergeant-major's ruse. The last statement had doubtless been untrue, intended to frighten him.

"In any case," he told himself, "this cold earth would kill any germs."

His feet and hands were already numb. He trotted around the hole, beating at his fingers. The stars paled as the hours went by.

Chaptel was wondering how long it took to make a spoon into a blade.

CHAPTEL was young, strong, born with an iron resistance to hardship. His ancestors for generations had been peasants, farmers, mountaineers. Out of the twelve men in number one pit, only two were sent down the line to the hospital. Although their parents were tuberculous, alcoholic, undernourished, these men themselves seemed to have their souls nailed to their bodies.

On the next morning Chaptel was given his clothes. He gulped down a pint of weak coffee, and relegated his experience to the past.

At six, he joined the gang bound for the rock-pile. He saw Duval, but as silence was the iron-clad rule he dare not converse with him. When the men arrived at the point of the road where the work of the day was to be done, the heavy hammers were distributed, the *Turcos* took their posts rifles in hand. As for the sergeant in command, he sought a soft place in the shade, stretched out, his cap shading his face, and went to sleep, regardless of pounding hammers and an occasional altercation between the sentries and the convicts.

Refusing Duval's offer to be freed from work at the expense of the others, he swung the tool with good will. As for Duval, he lighted a cigaret, sat in the shade, keeping an eye on the sergeant, and snarled his orders to the others, who came in turn to do their stint toward his rightful share of labor. Duval handed Messaoud, the corporal, a cigaret, and conversed with him in the broken speech, half-Arab, half-French, that the *Turcos* used.

At ten, the first meal of the day was brought from the kitchens in large pails. The rations were fairly generous. Boiled beans, a few ounces of beef, plenty of bread, washed down with a pint of coarse, biting red wine. For Duval, the cooks had sent a tidbit, two short, thick sausages and a raw onion. Seemingly, Duval's leadership was recognized outside of his tent.

Between ten and twelve, the temperature rose. The hillside was flooded with sunlight, and the broken stones glittered like diamonds. After eating, the sergeant went back to sleep. A native in dingy-hooded garments came near, leading a few goats. He sold the milk to the convicts, and when asked, produced packages of cigarets, playing cards and newspapers. These last were a month old, and tattered. Chaptel learned that they had been retrieved by the sergeant's orderlies and then sold. With the sergeant asleep, low conversations started, leading as usual to scufflings and insults. It appeared that the convicts could not talk five minutes without quarreling.

Duval joined Chaptel.

"How did you make out last night?"

Chaptel told him.

"He's an awful slob," Chaptel went on. "You're all so ready with a knife up here, I wonder why he wasn't bled like the pig he is, before now."

"We might get a worse one."

"I don't believe it!"

Duval laughed shortly. Bichet, it seemed, was considered a fairly good sergeant-major. He usually rested content with the initiation and then left the men alone. Other sergeants kept after them months on end.

"And even among yourselves you don't get on well. I wonder why, for instance, they stand for what you do, Duval."

"Same reason. They might get some one worse."

"Why don't they inform the authorities about you, and any one who succeeded you."

"Why? Because it's the rule of the place that the informer be killed. Do you see that chap over there?" He indicated. "He's due for a sticker in his belly sometime. He denounced one of the *costauds* here. The rest of us have sworn to do him up. Did you ever hear of the 'Ace of Spades'?"

"The ace of spades?"

"Yes. A society—a gang existing in every camp, every barrack, every prison throughout military establishments, stretching even to the civil penitentiary in Guiana? Well, I belong to it. No one not a member ever hears of it. All the *costauds*, *caids*, *malabars*—gang leaders—belong to it."

Duval bared his arm.

"You see that?"

He exhibited a small tattoo, just above the elbow, on the inside of the left arm, a well-executed reproduction of a pip of spades.

"You could get money, even freedom, for reporting this," Duval declared. "They've been trying to find out about this for years, practically since the creation of the units. The officers, the sergeants, all feel that it exists. Those of the convicts who don't belong know nothing more than the stripers."

"Then why did you tell me?"

"I'll get you in, kid, no later than tonight. It'll save you a lot of trouble."

"I realize that it will help me," said Chaptel cautiously. "But nothing is ever gained without something given in exchange. What will I be expected to do?"

"Nothing much. A fellow wearing this is generally a tough mug, and able to fight. But when he is transfered to a new camp if he finds that the *costaud* belongs to the bunch he doesn't try to oust him. He says nothing, and shares on the graft. If any man squeals on the *costaud* the Knaves of the Ace of Spade get him. That's why, if you stay here a hundred years, you won't see another case of squealing. That fellow over there believes he got away with it. He'll find out."

Chaptel stared curiously at the doomed man. Thin and short, almost dwarfed, he wheeled a barrow loaded with stones. He held a cigaret in the corner of his mouth and grinned out of the other corner. Probably a half-wit. But the *costaud*, no more than the mills of justice, would take cognizance of his lessened responsibility. It stirred vague, unknown emotions in Chaptel to see a man, to all intents and purposes dead, walking away with a smile on his face.

Messaoud leaned close.

"Sergeant awake," he whispered.

The non-com. had unexpectedly awakened, and now came toward the two.

"What where you showing him on your arm?" he asked Duval.

"Nothing much, Sergeant," Duval replied. "He thought his forearm larger than mine."

At the same time the Slicer extended his arm and nodded to Chaptel to do the same.

"It is larger," the sergeant declared.

Duval, surprized, looked down at the two arms.

"By ——, it is! I hadn't paid attention."

Chaptel caught something of annoyance in his tone. Evidently the apache was proud of his bulk, and did not like to be surpassed even on one count.

"What did you do before coming here?" the sergeant asked, curiously.

"Automobile mechanic."

"You've got an arm like a country-fair wrestler!" the non com. stated. "I'll keep an eye on you. I'll bet you'll be *costaud* here within a month."

He pulled a metal-cased watch from his fob pocket, yawned. "You two get back to work. With big strong muscles like that I'll expect your piles to be larger from now on."

Contact between jailer and convict invariable ended unpleasantly for the latter.

That night, Duval led Chaptel from the tent. In the moonlight, the guard on the scaffold stood out sharply. Duval whistled.

"That's Messaoud," he explained. "Nothing to fear, so long as we don't try to beat it out of bounds."

He led the way to the huts where the kitchen was installed. Inside a score of men were gathered, the Knaves of the Ace of Spade. The head cook, himself a convict, shut the door and lighted the lamp. Chaptel was introduced and instructed in the various signs and passwords, then sworn to preserve secrecy. Had he refused to take the oath, he would not have been allowed to go out alive. The melodramatic performance half-awed, half-amused him.

Then, using a card as a pattern, a tattoo artist marked Chaptel with the brand of the gang. As the fellow worked, his mouth stuffed with needles, Chaptel wished that he had not accepted Duval's offer. This tattoo habit in the battalion, in the camps, was degrading. And here he was, undergoing the rather painful process for the squalid privileges to be obtained.

His initiation over, the others ignored him. The cook produced wine, cards were brought out. Chaptel joined in and lost. As the wine took effect the crude formalities were abandoned. Chaptel saw things that night that threw a new light on the Knaves, and on Duval.

The time-honored song of the *Bat' d'Af* rose—

"Trabadja la moukere,
Trabadja bonno!"

Chaptel pulled the cook's sleeves.

"The sergeants! They'll hear."

"You're young," laughed the cook. "They're dead drunk by now. I swiped this absinthe from the table, right under their noses, and they didn't move."

He brandished a half-filled quart.

And Chaptel saw the mixing of a strange cocktail—strong red wine cut with absinthe.

The door opened, a *Turco* appeared. Chaptel started up, but the Arab was not on duty.

"Bonjour, Kruya!" he greeted the cook. "Good day, brother, have you a small bit of sugar?"

"The usual blackmail," said the cook.

He gave the *Turco* a handful of lump sugar, which the native stuffed in the pockets of his voluminous trousers. He contemplated the orgy placidly, until his attention was drawn to the card game. He hesitated, then squatted down and asked that he be dealt a hand. Net result: He lost all the copper coins in his various pockets, a knife and a silver watch. No more than Chaptel, could he cope with the sharpers. He left scowling.

"You better give him back that watch," Duval suggested to the winner. "He'll get mad and shoot you when he finds you alone, if you don't. You remember—" He listed several names.

"I'll give it back to him all right," the other assured him. "But I'll coax a night outside for it next time he's on guard."

"That's the idea!" Duval complimented. Then, seeing Chaptel's tin cup still full—

"You're not drinking—what's the matter?"

"Not thirsty."

Duval roared with amusement, called the other's attention and repeated what he called a good joke.

"Didn't I say he was a funny guy? He don't drink because he's not thirsty. What an egg!"

Two hours before daylight, the party broke up. Duval halted by the door for a few words with one of the men.

"Tonight?"

"Tonight."

"That'll mean no end of a fuss, and no work in the morning!"

Back in the tent, Chaptel removed his shoes and went to sleep. The last words he had heard had meant nothing to him. In fact he was too disgusted, tired and sleepy to fathom the meaning.

In the morning, the groups formed as usual, and were about to move off when one of the sergeants exclaimed—

"2541! Where is he?"

There was an inquiry. Then the sergeant decided to visit the man's tent. He came out, waving his arms about his head in wild excitement.

"He's croaked! Some one croaked him!"

He ran toward the office, returned with Bichet who wore only undershirt, trousers and slippers.

"Bring him out here. I can't stand the smell," said Bichet petulantly.

Two men entered the tent, and returned with the body of the man whom Duval had pointed out the previous afternoon. They laid the corpse on the ground.

The skinny legs jutted out of the gray shirt. Both hands were clasped around the protruding end of one of the spoon-knives. His open eyes stared straight toward the sun, and his lips still grinned.

Bichet scowled at the gathered men.

"Who did this?"

No one answered.

"Get back to your tents. I'll get after you one by one."

But the sergeant's questioning did not produce the truth. The companions of the dead man remembered nothing, had seen nothing, heard nothing. Yet the little fellow had not died immediately. His hands were bloody, as if he had tried to free the blade. He must have groaned, he probably screamed. But before the stolid denials, Bichet was forced to give up. A report was made, sent down to Ain Saffra.

Bichet was like a maniac. —— reigned in the camp for the next few days. Tortures were freely distributed. Chaptel miraculously escaped his share. Duval spent two nights naked in the pit and came through the ordeal without so much as a head cold. The murder made the *Turcos* nervous. They wounded a man who had gone aside from the others, suspecting that he tried to escape.

When the next meeting of the Knaves of Spade was called in the cook house, the chef had important news.

"I was waiting on table," he said, for he combined the culinary art with the task of table attendant to the sergeants, "and Bichet was almost crying. 'What do you think,' he asked the others. 'They're bawling *me* out. They say it's the sixth in three months. That's true, but how can I help it? Do I sleep in the tents? I can't know ahead of time who's going to be killed, can I? And they're looking into the pneumonia cases. You'd think this scum here was good as gold, the way they worry down at headquarters!'

" 'Don't worry, sergeant,' another pipes up. 'It'll blow over like it always has. They've got to justify their existence, pretend they earn their salt, that's all.'

"But Bichet gets madder.

" 'Don't worry!——' he yells. 'You know what they write me? I'll get a lieutenant up here, that's what! You know what that means. —— fool of a baby with a lot of —— foolish ideas!'

"But the others laughed.

" 'Don't worry,' they assured him. 'No officer'll come up here. It's too far from town and women.' "

Opinion among the Knaves was divided. Some believed a lieutenant would come. But the majority agreed with the skeptical sergeant. No officer liked the lonely existence in the hills.

"Wouldn't a lieutenant change things for the better?" Chaptel asked.

"How could he?"

"The sergeants couldn't get away with so much. The officers don't graft on food either. We'd get more meat, more wine. The regulations state that once in a while we're to get sausages, yet I never see any, save what the cook gives us when we're together."

"Those are the regulations' sausages, kid," the cook said. "I keep them for the real boys."

"Would the officer stand for the pit?" Chaptel went on.

"No."

"I'm willing to lose the extra portion of sausage I get here to escape the pit."

The others glanced at each other. Duval scowled, then, instead of the sharp words he intended to speak, explained:

"A lieutenant here will mean good-by to us for the time. The sergeants will stay awake on the job, and we'll have to work. Moreover he'll always be snooping around trying to find out who is the *costaud*. The officers have it in for us. It's as much as your life is worth to be found out. You get sent down to Ain Saffra; you're asked a lot of questions. If you have any money hidden, they find it and confiscate it for the hospital fund.

"Then you get sent, not to a camp, but to a prison. Sometimes you get two years in a cell, which two years don't count on your time here. And they try hard as they can to pinch a murder on you to send you to Guiana. No; the officer ain't good for us."

"There's always a way of getting rid of him," suggested the cook.

"Even that ain't safe. They make a fuss about a convict but a —— of a lot more about an officer."

"If the worst comes to the worst, the cook can stew a few laurel leaves in his coffee," volunteered another.

"The taste gives it away. And what if they took the body for autopsy? I'd be ripe for the 'widow'—the guillotine," the cook said.

"That's so," Duval concluded. "Let's hope he don't come."

THE lieutenant fell into camp like a bolt from the blue.

He arrived at three in the afternoon. After a short interview with Bichet, he sought out the labor gangs on the hillside.

Chaptel saw with glee the change on his non-com's. face when the officer shook him awake.

"Is that the way you give your men an example of industry! A third of your men are loafing while the others do the work. I've been watching for the best part of an hour."

The sergeant buttoned his coat, saluted. His face became redder and redder, until Chaptel feared it would burst open, like an over-ripe tomato.

"I beg your pardon, Lieutenant."

"All right—all right. You can't be expected to show zeal. The sergeant-major gives the keynote, I suppose."

The lieutenant was a tall, wiry young man between twenty-two and twenty-five. He was blond, with a small mustache crossing his tanned face, a face lighted by a pair of resolute eyes. His uniform was elegantly cut and he carried himself well. Even with this aristocratic appearance, he managed to convey to the convicts that he understood them. Instead of barking orders as did the sergeants, he merely motioned for them to gather in front of him.

"There's been a lot of queer business in this camp," he announced. "That's over. I know it's useless to try to get at the bottom of the killings. But if it's possible I intend to prevent the repetition. I wish you fellows to understand that it is to your interest to behave yourselves. After I have passed three months here, I'll draw up a list of worthy cases and submit it to my superiors, recommending the best for rehabilitation, for pardon.

"You can make this job of mine easy or hard. It's up to you. I can only say that I have my work to do as you have yours. It will be best if we pull together."

He indicated the road, the rockpiles.

"I have consulted the papers left by the various inspectors. This road hasn't advanced a mile in two years. That is why you regard it as a hopeless task. It's an insult to your self-respect to expect you to become enthusiastic over a monotonous grind. The idea behind this road is not to make you labor but to use your labor. You have enough rock broken up for the moment. Tomorrow we'll change the action a bit. We'll clear the land ahead."

He turned to the sergeant.

"Draw back fifty yards and wait until I call you."

Then to the convicts:

"He can not hear. Have you any complaint to make?"

No one replied. Chaptel would have stepped forward, but Duval pulled his sleeve warningly. The lieutenant waited for a few moments, then shrugged:

"I know you have. But you won't talk. I don't blame you. When you know me better, you will. Go back to camp now. Work is over for the day."

He walked away, located his horse where he had left it in the bushes. Following the disgruntled sergeant, the men marched back to camp.

"Why didn't you let me talk?" Chaptel asked of Duval.

"Because you're a fool. Do you think that jewel will stick it up here long? He'll go back before two weeks. Then the sergeants would learn who spoke."

In camp the lieutenant continued his detective work. Again he called the men to face him.

"The regulations permit you to have macaroni. Today is down as macaroni day. What did you get?"

"Boiled beans," said the cook.

"Yesterday?"

"Boiled beans."

"I saw the rations cut up for today, cook. Was there enough meat for each man? Why were some mess tins better filled than others? No need to answer. You have special friends."

The lieutenant turned to Bichet.

"I'll have the lock repaired on the supply shack, sergeant. You'll issue personally the supplies for each day. And I'll see that each man gets a fair share. Any one among you able to fix that lock?"

No one volunteered. The lieutenant bit his lips, paled somewhat and shrugged again.

One of the sergeants stepped forward.

"Chaptel, 3039, is a mechanic."

"Chaptel, where are you, Chaptel?"

Chaptel saluted.

"Here, Lieutenant."

"Why didn't you answer my demand?"

"I am a mechanic, Lieutenant, not a locksmith."

"You seem fairly intelligent, though. There's a tool kit. Come over to the shack and try your hand."

Chaptel followed respectfully. A quick examination of the lock convinced him that he could repair it in a few hours. He set to work with screw driver and removed the massive iron from the door. He sat down on the threshold, and spread out the various parts for inspection.

"My name is Olivier Lespart," volunteered the lieutenant.

Chaptel looked up.

"Mine is Edmond Chaptel," he grinned, "or 3039 if you prefer, Lieutenant."

"Edmond Chaptel is sufficient between us," Lespart assured him. "How do you find it here, Chaptel?"

His tone was friendly. But Chaptel was wary.

"So-so, Lieutenant. Good and bad moments, as everywhere else."

The *Turcos* had herded the convicts back into the tents. The sergeants had vanished into the huts. The two were alone. Lespart produced a cigaret case and offered it to Chaptel.

"Have one," he said. "You'll work better if you smoke."

Chaptel wordlessly took the proffered cigaret.

"Man to man, Chaptel, forgetting you are a prisoner and I an officer, can't you tell me something about what goes on here? You blame us for not helping, yet you won't do anything to facilitate our task. We see the outside of you men, but have no idea of your reactions, your habits, inside the tents. Your obstinate silence is what loses you.

"Don't blame the sergeants. They're only men, and in their turn when they were new doubtless tried to do their best. Gradually they get to hate you all, realizing your lack of trust. Then the loneliness, the drink, takes hold of them and you get a Bichet. I know of a man who has just been thrown out of the army, a former sergeant, because he was friendly with his men, and they took advantage of it. Five escaped, and he was discharged. He's trying to get reinstated. Maybe he will. Do you believe that he will then treat his men in an affectionate manner?"

"No, Lieutenant."

"I have been in the Battalion three years," Lespart went on. "I have seen hundreds of men, and I am a fairly accurate judge. You're not prison game, Chaptel. All that ails you is a quick temper at times. I'll bet this cigaret case against the spoon-knife you doubtless have hidden somewhere, that the initial cause of your trouble was a quick blow given in anger."

"The spoon-knife is more useful to me than that thing," stolidly replied Chaptel. "I won't bet."

He held up the lock-bolt, snapped it with his finger.

Lespart laughed.

"You and I can reach an understanding, Chaptel. I'm not asking you to denounce your comrades. I despise an informer. But we're alike. Had you been lucky you might be in my boots, had I been unlucky I might be in yours."

Chaptel choked, and his eyes prickled. Yes, he felt nearer to this officer than to any one he had spoken with since arriving in Algeria. Had they met on an equal basis they undoubtedly would have become great friends. And Lespart was stretching out his hand to him. He sniffed uncomfortably, and worked savagely at the piece of iron.

"What goes on in the tents at night, Chaptel?"

"You can't imagine, Lieutenant. Sometimes I wonder whether I'm on earth. Sometimes I feel like vomiting my soul in sheer disgust. The smells, the fleas, the bugs—and the beatings."

"We know something of that. But you can serve every one here, if you'll suggest what is lacking, why the prisoners have such gloomy ways, regardless of outside causes."

"They don't know how to play, Lieutenant. They don't laugh healthily. Most of them never were kids. They were hard-boiled men at six, vicious degenerates at ten and thieves at fourteen. Nobody ever took any interest in them. You know what sort of fatherly counsel one gets from jailers!"

Chaptel laughed an old man's laugh.

"That's it, Chaptel, I don't know. My kind doesn't know. The poor, the orphans, the brats of apaches and low women, they form a sort of small nation within the nation. They speak a different language, obey a different code of honor. I, it must be admitted, have eavesdropped on groups of men, to try to see whether I could learn something useful. They spoke a French I did not understand.

"Prison argot, made up of words from the battalion, the penitentiaries, the prisons and the slums. Old man Hugo, who shuddered at the slang of the criminal of his day, would find something to astonish him here. It isn't one chapter he could write on slang, but books, a library!"

As he spoke he got up to screw the lock back into place.

"Just to test it," he explained. "I'll take it down again and finish."

Chaptel marveled. Here was a "striper," a man in uniform, with twining braid on his sleeves, the representative of the crushing system, and Chaptel did not hate him. Beneath the clothing was a man, a real man, strongly tempered, sensitively organized.

"Are any of the men interested in sports?" Lespart went on.

"No. They're all fighters, that is they know a multitude of tricks, gouging, kicking, but I don't think there's one who can box, or fence or wrestle according to the rules."

"How would they react to physical recreation?"

"I don't know."

"What you said about their not knowing how to play struck me. There's an angle that might get me an opening into their trust. What do you do Sundays?"

"Work—or we stay in the tents."

"Did you ever play football?"

"I belonged to a team that played Swiss teams from across the border. Not a crack team, of course, but fairly good."

"Then you can explain the game to them. By Sunday I'll have a ball. I'll send to the Zouave barracks for one. Don't say anything precise about it, but try to find out who'd like to play and who wouldn't. I'll have this camp happy before I'm through. As for you, I'll see that you get work repairing tools and little things. No use wasting your skill on the road. By the way, mark out the playing field and put up goal-posts."

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"When you get finished with that lock, let me know."

SUNDAY afternoon saw two teams lined up for the initial soccer-football game. Chaptel was center, Duval goal-keeper. All had eagerly grasped at this occasion to distinguish themselves.

Chaptel's experience counted heavily for his side. He avoided the others with absurd ease, and trickled the ball down the field toward the goal. To make the contest even he held himself in reserve. Duval left his post often, leaped into the game, and regardless of friend or foe, kicked the ball. He had no comprehension of team play. And neither did any one else.

The losing aggregation passed from enthusiasm to sullen determination. The smiles vanished from their faces and they struggled as other men fight. Several times, Chaptel's opponent, outplayed, swung a fist toward his head, but Chaptel ducked and left his man asprawl behind him.

Several fights started, and were quelled by Lespart's interference. The lieutenant, however, could not be everywhere at once. One of the players suddenly was down, howling, nursing his shin. The skin was gone for several inches. The sufferer quit then and there, and Chaptel's team played on with but ten men.

Slow to learn the intricacies of the play, the convicts had discovered every possible means of fouling before the game was half over. Chaptel, upon a signal from Lespart, eased up, and allowed the others to bear the burden. The result was a swift desperate advance against Duval, who waited, teeth set, brows knit, but could not prevent a goal. Enraged, the apache dived forward, head first, and smashed into the midsection of the man who had scored.

The awe in which Duval was held had

been forgotten in the heat of the struggle, and one of the men swung heartily for the Slicer's jaw. Duval shook his head, recovered instantly from a punch that would have dropped the average man, spun around, landed on his hands and kicked the fellow under the chin.

That was a mere prelude to what followed. Spectators rushed upon the field, punched, bit, kicked. Blood flowed. Chaptel, who had hurried forward to avoid the mix-up, reeled back with a gash over his eye, just in time to stop Lespart.

"Don't go in there, Lieutenant! They're mad. They won't know you from any one else."

"I can't let them go on! They'll kill each other!"

"If you get hurt, they'll all suffer. Better get the *Turcos*."

Bichet and the non-coms wisely kept away. The *Turcos* were sent for, and arrived at the double. Gun butts soon calmed the most ardent. Duval's face was swelled, one leg of his trousers had given away, his big chest heaved and his eyes glared.

"Get back and try it again!" he challenged. "Let's see if you can score now!"

But Lespart had wisely decided to call off the game. This was the first and last game of football played in the camp. To the convicts, sportsmanship was a dead letter. Their self-esteem suffered from any marked superiority. When Lespart arranged foot races as less conducive to homicidal fury, the results were contested.

"He tripped me, Lieutenant!"

"—— liar! Dung! Filth!"

"Wait. I'll bleed you like a pig!"

One thing the contests accomplished: The breaking of the obstinate silence usually maintained by prisoners before officers. Chaptel saw that competition would merely create new hatreds, new jealousies. He foresaw that the time might come when the champion runner might be knifed by an envious rival.

"Is there anything you men can do without fighting?" Lespart demanded.

"Nothing," said Duval.

The games were ended.

Then Lieutenant Lespart went into his own pocket to purchase two sheep for the camp, and the prisoners enjoyed that unbelievable luxury—roast meat, meat that had not been boiled into fibrous fragments.

For this gastronomical treat, the convicts were not ungrateful. A delegation, in which Duval figured, knocked at the lieutenant's door, and when he came forth in answer, addressed him:

"In the abyss of misery in which we poor outcasts wallow," the spokesman said, using as do all *Bat'd'Af* men on festive occasions, ready made phrases culled from socialist newspapers, "your generosity has brought a ray of sunshine. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts, hearts that some may call heaps of dung, but in which the tiny blue flower of sentiment still blooms. We——"

"All right," Lespart said with a smile. "I'm glad you like it. Double wine ration tonight."

"Lieutenant, you are better than a mother."

"If any one ever annoys you," another offered. "Just tell me, that's all—just tell me!"

"I will," Lespart laughingly assured him.

The group left and returned to their mess kits. The cooks brought buckets of wine. The tin cups were passed around, drained, refilled. A convivial atmosphere pervaded the camp. Blows exchanged at the football field were forgiven, men embraced in emotional outburst. All in all the day was a great success.

"And what do you think of the lieutenant now?" Chaptel asked Duval triumphantly. "Isn't he a regular guy?"

Duval, his mouth full, cleared his throat with a gulp of wine.

"He's a kid. We'll get away with murder while he's here. So far, he doesn't seem to want to bother us *costauds*."

"If you lay low and don't ride the others, I guess he won't," Chaptel said. "And I guess the days of the pit and the beatings are over."

"Lay low, ——!" Duval said. "With a soft fool like him, there'll be a lot for a smart fellow to do. And we'll need money."

"He'll tumble to tricks in no time. I talked to him the other day. He's no soft fool."

Duval stared intently at Chaptel.

"I know you did," he said shortly.

He munched in silence for some minutes.

"Wouldn't it be queer, kid, if he happened to know things he shouldn't know?"

"You think I——"

"I don't think nothing—yet. I just said it would be queer."

As he spoke, Duval dug his spoon viciously into the roast meat, separated a sizable morsel, which he picked up with his fingers and crammed into his mouth. He wiped his lips clear of grease with the back of his hand.

"It would be queer," he repeated.

LESPART'S first attempt at a new order of things, revealed him to be far from the soft fool Duval had branded him.

His idealism was bolstered by a very solid sense of reality. Bichet soon learned that the orders he received were meant to be carried out. Chaptel no longer went to the rock-pile, but wandered about the establishment doing odd jobs, mending a roof here, a leaky drain pipe there. The tents were cleaned out and disinfected in one day. Lespart found the spoon-knives, and passed bi-weekly inspections, during which the spoons issued must be presented. Chaptel admired the common sense methods he used.

Although their lot was incomparably better than it had been, the men grumbled and cursed the young officer for the privileges he did not grant. Moreover, Lespart soon obtained an almost mystic grip over the *Turcos*. Overnight, they became almost honest, refused bribes, or when they did accept a bribe refused to grant the purchased freedom. The night meetings of the Knaves of Spades were ended for the time. The lieutenant had formed an annoying habit of getting up in the night, and roaming about the inclosure in search of prowling prisoners.

On the surface all was quiet. In the tents, trouble seethed. Becoming sure of protection, the oppressed members of the aggregation refused to supply half of their money to the various *costauds*. The delectable dainties served by the cook to his friends were no more. The strong-man stock, Chaptel remarked jokingly to Duval, had sunk fifty points below par.

"Wait, he laughs best who laughs last," the Slicer said darkly.

"Remember the tale of the iron pot against the earthern pot? The lieutenant is iron. We're earthenware."

"We'll see, we'll see. It's all right as long as he doesn't come out openly against us leaders."

"If he knew, he would——"

Duval peered at him keenly, bared his teeth in a sort of snarl. He was not pleasing when he did this. Chaptel remembered the murdered old woman, the stiff-legged informer, and the vague fantoms of five men Duval boasted of having sent to a better world. He shuddered. Not so much because he loathed the man he called friend, but because of the fact that he still liked him. He was inclined to think that something perverted had crept into him, when he could share bread and wine bucket with a self-confessed assassin.

"Kid," Duval said once more, "you're getting too fond of that officer for my liking. I usually stand for no such thing from my pals. Take warning."

Chaptel, versed in the ways of his surroundings, shrugged, spat on the ground.

Duval seemed to harden, and gathered himself as if about to leap. Alarmed, Chaptel clenched his fists, felt his heart thumping against his ribs and knew that he paled. But the Slicer finished with a laugh.

"You're all right, kid. I was teasing you."

The influence of Lespart, a clean man, was taking effect on Chaptel. The tyranny exerted by Duval over the others in the tent irked him. When he heard the sickening thump of fist on flesh, the groans and stifled screams as the Slicer asserted his mastery, he found himself vibrating with indignation. Once or twice he speculated on his chances against Duval, or any other. He had been a mere boy a few months ago, but he had grown large and strong. But he stilled his desire, fought against slithering into the universal attitude of the camp—admiration for brute strength.

One night, after the last round by the sergeant, when the majority of the men were asleep, Duval felt thirsty. He lighted a candle, filched for him by the cook, and proclaimed his wish. No one rushed forward, as was the custom, with a filled container. Duval was enraged. He reached out, grasped the arm of the man nearest him.

"Who's got wine?"

"I don't know."

"Get up and look. Bring it to me."

The others had awakened. In the vacillating glow of the candle, Chaptel saw the drawn faces, the trembling lips. The man detailed to search for the wine went from one bed to another. At last he found a full pail. He seized it without protest from the owner and offered it to Duval. The *costaud* drank until he turned the pail bottom up. He should have been satisfied, and a sigh of relief breathed through the tent.

But Duval arose, tightened his belt. The two quarts of wine had taken no visible effect. He did not stagger, but his eyes blazed more than usual. He licked his lips. Slowly, without saying a word, he made for the man who had hidden the drink from him. As he walked, his shadow, huge and distorted, moved against the dingy cloth wall.

The man, whose guilt had been to keep for himself wine carefully hoarded from the daily rations, got up and cringed back, staring, fascinated.

"I won't do it again, Duval," he promised.

"You bet you won't."

"I thought some one else would give you wine."

"My self-respect, what of it? Am I the *costaud*, or ain't I?"

And the Slicer leaped forward. In his hands the man was a feather. He twisted him about, slapped him, threw him on the ground. The beaten man dare not cry out, for a cry might have brought the *Turcos*. He stifled his groans. Tears of pain ran down his cheeks. He made no attempt to fight back.

"Let go, oh, let go!"

Duval gave a last wrenching pull on his arm. There was a muffled crack. A bone was broken. Duval surprized released his hold and stepped back. But he was unwilling to admit having overstepped his rights.

"Serves you right, you sneak!" he said.

He came back to his cot, blew out the light, and soon was snoring. Chaptel heard the man groaning in the darkness. But no more than any one else, did he find the courage to go forward and speak to him.

In the morning, the fellow's arm was discovered to be swelled and useless. Lespart decided that he should be sent to the hospital in Ain Saffra. From the sufferer, he could learn nothing. From his comrades, no more. He questioned Chaptel, asked him in the name of past favors to give him a hint as to the identity of the *costaud*. Chaptel reminded him of his own stated opinion of stool-pigeons.

"All right! I'll get the truth myself."

The next day, instead of being taken to work, the men were gathered before Lespart.

"A man has been hurt," he said. "I am perfectly aware that there are men low enough to take advantage of weakness. You call them *costauds*. Their right name usually can be found, branding their occupation before they came here. The sole difference is that here they live off men. I'm going to root them out. The fellow I'm after is the one who broke this man's arm.

"I know that it is dangerous for you to talk, much as you would wish to. Above all, I don't want any more killings. "In there—" Lespart indicated the room he used as an office—"in there are sheets of paper each bearing a list of the men in the tent where this 'accident' occurred. On the table there is a pencil. Next to it, a box. I want you, one by one, to enter the room. No one but myself can see you, and only from the back. I want you to mark a cross opposite the name of the man who did that trick. Then you'll fold the paper and slip it in the box."

He signaled Sergeant-Major Bichet to call the roll. One by one the men entered, then came out again. Chaptel took his turn. Alone in the room, he tried to puzzle out the lieutenant's scheme.

Lespart must know that no prisoner would betray the *costaud*, even with apparently no chance for discovery. Although they could not get along peaceably with each other, they banded together against the outside. The papers were not marked, he assured himself, neither on the front or back. He folded the sheet without making the requested cross, and slipped it into the box.

Duval went in soon after, saluting meekly as he passed Lespart. When the proceedings were over, the gang-sergeant led the men to work all save Chaptel, who was installing a system of gutters to catch rain water for the laundry.

Very soon, Lespart came from the office, grinning.

"I know who did that thing last night."

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"That brute, Duval."

Chaptel went on hammering for a moment, then he looked up and faced the lieutenant candidly.

"Ah? You think so?"

"Yes, I think so, 3039!" He had a jocular way of addressing Chaptel by his number, which was far from making the prisoner feel degraded. "You know I'm right."

"I know nothing except that this is no day for me to be seen talking to you."

"I understand."

He left immediately.

Chaptel wondered how Lespart had arrived at this conclusion. He felt certain that no one would betray Duval. The risk would be too great.

Duval returned with the others. He sat next to Chaptel at meal time, eating heartily, pail between his knees. He spoke of the events of the day.

"Say," he exclaimed suddenly, "who'll pull a long face tonight? That long-nosed friend of yours. Thought he could find out something by that paper trick!"

Chaptel hesitated. Should he warn Duval? But in so doing he would betray himself, make it known that he had conversed with Lespart on an even footing. An unguarded word to the Slicer at this time might be dangerous. He remained silent.

Summoned again before the lieutenant, the men exchanged ironical glances. Duval winked at Chaptel.

"I told you I'd find the guilty party," said Lespart. "And I have."

Duval did not quiver. Doubtless he reasoned that the officer was bluffing.

"A *costaud* is always a coward. That's a rule. And a coward never loses an opportunity to insult a man he would not have the guts to speak to face to face. I gave him the opportunity. I am explaining everything fully so that not one of you may be accused of squealing. There is such a thing as invisible ink. If you'd paid careful attention to me, instead of calling me names beneath your breath, you'd have noticed that I had you go into the room according to roll-call, which makes numeration easy. After you had gone, I picked the papers out of the box. Only one was marked. A few words written clumsily, a disguised handwriting, the words not complimentary to me. I decided to find out who had been so rude. A candle on the invisible ink—and the number! I took the roll and counted the names. Who could wish to insult me? The man I was after. Simple, eh?"

Chaptel, without moving, glanced out of the corner of his eye. The Slicer was pale, but smiling. He was keeping up a good front. Moreover he was not convinced that he was identified. His last doubt was soon removed.

"Mesaoud, bring Achille Duval here."

Messaoud, gravely, came to Duval and conducted him forward.

"Here you are!" Lespart greeted him. "And you don't seem very sure of yourself. I have called you a coward. I repeat it. Your breed disgusts me as it would disgust any man with a stomach. Look at him, you men who refused to betray him. Isn't he a brave man? The little fellow, whose arm he broke, had probably done much less to him than call him a coward. He dare not touch me, because to touch me means the firing squad. He tortures men, has killed men, yet fears death himself."

Duval blanched.

"You gold-braided swine," he said firmly, loudly. "A sergeant taunted me until I struck him. Of the two of us, who is the greater coward? You, who dare me to touch you at the risk of my life, or me, the convict, with all your —— machine ready to squash me? If I am what I am, it's your kind that did it. Dare me again, and I'll throttle you. That's what I am—Achille Duval, the Slicer!"

"You're a bully, but not a coward," said Lespart.

Both had courage, Duval to talk back, Lespart to admit a mistake before the men. Around him, he felt a surge of enthusiasm, not for the officer, but for Duval. These men whom the Slicer had oppressed, were now proud of having been his slaves. A low murmur of approval rippled. And all of them, with the exception of Chaptel, hated this young man who was arresting their hero for their good.

Lespart beckoned to Sergeant-Major Bichet.

"Place him in irons."

"Yes, Lieutenant. Frog-tie him too?"

"No."

"Thank you, Lieutenant," Duval said suavely. "By the way, what am I arrested for. What has been my sin?"

Here Lespart made a grave mistake. An older man would have stood, by his first statement, would not have engaged conversation with the prisoner.

"You're under arrest for breaking that man's arm."

"I beg your pardon, *mon lieutenant*—" when occasion demanded Duval could express himself with elegance—"you may arrest me on suspicion; that's your right. But please do not consider me guilty. As for the slip, I do not admit having written it. It is very, very possible that the sheets were shifted." He gestured widely. "So many men handled them, and no one is infallible, save his Holiness the Pope."

This was a crucial moment. If the lieutenant discussed the matter further, Duval would argue and evade, and each clever reply was a point in favor with the other convicts. Between the officer, from another strata of society, who wished them well, and who was going to unnecessary trouble for their sakes, and the Slicer, who was of their class and tyrannized over them, their choice was made. One and all, they would stick to Duval. The psychology of it? Who can fathom the abnormal brain? The phrenometer has yet to be invented.

Lespart's small mustache bristled, each hair apparently straining forward. His eyes narrowed. When he spoke his voice had a strange metallic quality.

"I have a perfect right to clamp you in prison, with or without reason. I'm beginning to believe that's the right course to follow with you: Irons, pit, irons, pit. I have been unable to explain to your satisfaction why I am locking you up. You'll have plenty of time tonight to think it over."

"I always knew that your fine promises of justice would end in this manner," Duval said intrepidly. "I presume you will also prevent me from stating my case in writing."

Lespart smiled:

"Not at all. I'll take your protest to Ain Saffra. I'm going down there tomorrow on other business. Bichet, take Duval to jail. The rest of you, dismissed!"

On the afternoon that the lieutenant left, the gang-sergeants sought the customary shady spot. That the officer would never come back was the general belief. He was said to have taken a "run-out" powder, to have fled from the loneliness of the place, where he mingled neither with the sergeants nor the prisoners. Chaptel, himself was gripped by this popular belief.

The *costauds* settled accounts with those who had murmured against authority, who had refused a service due from a loyal serf to a baron of the large muscles. Before twilight came upon the hills, faces minus blackened eyes, swollen noses, and bruised ears were the exception. Yet, in spite of the disorder, a little thrill of relief pervaded the camp. With Lespart, actual suffering had been lessened, but other things had been missing, principally the complicity of the *Turcos* and the laxity of the sergeants.

Bichet immediately absorbed several drinks. His eyes gleaming, nose outthrust belligerently above his thick mustache, he set out to assert himself.

Chaptel was leisurely laboring on minor repair work—plugging a hole in a tin pot—when a formidable shock sprawled him face down into the dirt. He gained his feet, saluted the sergeant, and dusted his clothing. Bichet, agog with concentrated mirth, watched him.

"Eh, eh! Our model prisoner! How have you been, my dear boy? Hav'n't seen you to speak to for ages."

"Very well, Sergeant." Chaptel then risked a joke. "You have lost no strength yourself. What a heavy visiting card!"

Bichet was appreciative.

"You spring good ones, sonny. Well, now that your friend is gone what are you going to do? I hold it from very good source that the lieutenant has been assigned to a company leaving for the Sahara. So you'll be all by your little self. I'll try to keep you busy."

"Thank you, Sergeant."

Bichet braced his feet wide apart, and swayed back and forth, hands clasped behind his back.

"I have several plans for reform in mind," he declared. "As has been the custom, I'll discuss them with you. Now, the prisoners will receive salaries equal to non-coms'. A three-course dinner, good wine. I intend to construct beautiful, spacious dormitories. Twice a day, I and my comrades will line up, and allow you all to kick us. Isn't that a program?

"I have also written to the President of the Republic and to the Minister of War, suggesting various rewards for long service. Prisoners who stay with us ten years will receive the Military Medal and a pension. For twenty years, the Legion of Honor. No more brutality, kindness to be the rule. See, I am even kinder than the lieutenant. But all this," Bichet added with great show of courtesy, "is still uncertain, for the future."

Without warning he struck Chaptel in the face, cutting his lips.

The prisoner wiped the blood away and saluted.

"You'll do me the pleasure to drop that job you're playing at," Bichet went on, "and trot down to the rock-pile, select a hammer and get to work. I like palms hardened by honest toil. Yours are getting as soft and pink as those of a young lady brought up for marriage."

"Yes, Sergeant."

"You run very well. I saw you the day of the games. Make that clump of trees in thirty seconds or the pit tonight, and your skin for a nightshirt."

Chaptel held his cap in one hand and sped for the clump of trees indicated. The fear of the sergeant's wrath gave him unknown speed. Although he slowed down to a moderate walk as soon as he was out of sight of Bichet, he was still panting when he found his tent mates. They were surprized to see him, and spared him neither caustic comments nor cutting allusions to his misfortunes.

"Good-by, soft snap!"

"His 'ittle friend's gone. No one loves him now!" said Big Mary, a tall, slender youth.

Chaptel, after a glance to assure himself that the sergeant was not watching, knocked Big Mary down with a open hand blow. Swinging a hammer, he faced the others. They saw that he was angry enough to use the tool, and subsided.

"I guess you'll get thick with Duval again," some one volunteered. "Believe me, it's better to pick your friends in the tent. Who gave you that smash?"

"I fell."

Messaoud, strolling near, suggested that he better work.

He was kept on the rock-pile three days.

Then news reached camp that Lespart had refused an assignment with combat troops, and would come back to the hills. It was Bichet who received the official announcement.

Bichet called Chaptel into his office, applied various ointments to his bruises.

"Go ahead with the work the lieutenant gave you," he said. "Between ourselves, I think you better keep your mouth shut. He may go away again, for good. Remember, I never forgot either a dirty trick or a favor."

"I'll be dumb, Sergeant."

"That's right, 3039."

"When will he be back?"

"In four or five days."

When Chaptel went for his food, the cook leaned close and whispered:

"Kitchen tonight, after the last roll-call. Messaoud's on guard. The Slicer will be there."

"He's in irons."

"Trust me."

THE cook made good his word. Duval was there when Chaptel reported at the meeting of the Knaves.

Bichet and the sergeants were drowning their disappointment in absinthe, had been since four in the afternoon. To filch the keys from the semi-conscious man had been an easy matter for the cook. Chaptel strongly suspected that the culinary artist had added certain ingredients to the men's coffee not mentioned in the receipt-book. Messaoud had forgotten his newly acquired principles before the offer of a kilo of sugar.

"Hello, kid," Duval said, extending his hand.

"Hello, how are you making out?"

The Slicer laughed.

"I'm used to it. All in all I must have spent the good part of a year in irons."

Then the usual songs were sung, the customary drinks served. But Chaptel felt that something important would be decided before the meeting broke up. The cook was fidgeting. Duval was more nervous than he cared to admit. Often, a hush fell over the gathering, during which time the men stared at each other without words.

"Let's get down to business," Duval said at last.

His dominance was pronounced. His courageous reply to Lespart had branded him not only a strong man but a daring champion. He propped his elbows on his knees, nursed his chin in the palms of his hands. Chaptel again was fascinated by the massive face, the hard eyes.

"About Lespart something must be done," the Slicer stated. "He's coming back here. He's found me out, and it's only a question of time before he finds us all out, and tumbles to the meaning of the ace of spades."

"You were foolish to write what you did on the paper," Chaptel offered.

"That ain't the question, kid. It's not what I did; but what we're going to do. You fellows are no wiser than me, are you? He'll find some way to get under your skin. Lespart ain't the sort to be scared by warnings. He's a stubborn ass; proof of it, he's coming back. For myself, I fear nothing. He can't prove I broke that fool's arm. At the most, ninety days in a cell. One lives through it."

"That's a lot of talk," muttered the cook. "Are you scared to tell us what you're hinting at?"

"No. We've got to settle Lespart. There's only one way."

"Only one way," the others agreed.

"Got the deck of cards?" Duval asked.

The greasy pack was produced.

"Ace counts highest," stated the Slicer, to avoid possible controversy after the cutting. "Go to it, Chaptel."

Chaptel cut, without trembling. He felt strangely indifferent. But he breathed easier when he held up a two-spot.

"You're out—next!"

"What about yourself, Duval?" one of the Knaves remonstrated.

"Me? How could I? I'll be in irons."

The cook cut a queen. He mopped his shaven cranium nervously. Only when an ace was cut, did his hands cease shaking. At last every one was eliminated except two men who had cut aces. A second cut decided the question. The unlucky man accepted his lot quite calmly. "Woolen-Leg," as he was nicknamed, was serving his thirteenth year in the penitentiary, being unfortunate. When he chose to punish a balky serf, a sergeant usually appeared. He had a flat face, his eyes were colorless and his skin shone like a mirror.

"It's my business," he accepted. "I'll do it. But I've got to be told when, where and how."

"When?" Duval mused. "As soon as possible after he comes back. On the first moonless night. There'll be no getting permission from the *Turcos*. In a big mess they'd squeal. Where? Let's see."

He was silent for several minutes.

"He always gets up around three in the morning and snoops around between the tents. To make sure, some one will watch. You, Cook. When he comes out of his hut, you can hoot once. Woolen-Leg will slide out and lay for him. In the far tent two of you will start arguing loud. He won't watch himself, but will run, straight for the trouble. You know him. That's all."

"Is it?" Woolen-Leg asked scornfully. "Do you think I can get him with my bare hands? He's no weak sister, and packs a gun. And he took away our stickers."

"The cook will give you one."

"Me? Never!" howled the cook. "I'd be accused of it."

"Sure you would, unless you fixed it this way, stupid," Duval said. "Two three days before the thing, tomorrow if you want, yell like blazes, say some one pinched your bacon hacker. All the time you've got it hidden away where you can put your hand on it. You're not such a fool that you can't get it to Woolen-Leg on the quiet."

"I'd prefer not to have anything to do with it," the cook said. "I'll get the irons for losing the knife."

"We'd all prefer," Duval said with heavy sarcasm, "thirty thousand francs income, a mansion on Victor Hugo Avenue. Woolen-Leg is not kicking. Why are you?"

"Oh, me!" Woolen-Leg put in modestly. "One more or less——"

"After it's all over there'll be —— to pay," Duval went on. "We'll have gendarmes, captains, lieutenants, judges, up here. I have been in a camp before when an officer got *removed*. You better have your stories ready, and stick to them. There won't be no torture to make you own up. The newspaper boys will come up from Algiers, Oran and even Paris. But the judges are tricky and they'll try to catch you. If any one tells you that he knows you didn't do it, but was there any talk of it before it happened, say: 'No, the lieutenant was such a regular guy that no one wished to hurt him. It must have been an outside job. Better question the natives in the village.' That's the way it was worked before, the time I was telling you about. They got the brother of the officer's native queen! And gave him twenty years for luck."

"I guess it will sort of cool off the rest," Woolen-Leg remarked. "Lespart with a kitchen knife in his belly."

Chaptel, who had been sitting dumbly in his corner, accepting all this free talk about murder without emotion, shuddered.

He recalled the stiff legs of that other, emerging from the dingy gray shirt. More than this, he feared the long days of expectation, when Lespart would speak to him, offer him cigarets, joke, and all the time he, Chaptel, would know that he was as good as dead.

And that conclusive night in the tent, when he would listen for the cook's signal, when he would hear Woolen-Leg making his furtive way between the tents. There would be a cry, a scream. But no one else would pay any attention. The *Turco* on the scaffold might shout a question, then forget about it. And Chaptel would lie between the blankets, sweating cold, until Bichet discovered the corpse during the morning round. During that night, Chaptel felt, he would lose the last shred of self-respect. He would be guilty of conspiracy to murder. Everything that happened to him from then on would be deserved.

Lespart had treated him like a man. Whatever light there had been in his life since he left France, had been due directly to the lieutenant. Chaptel imagined the rôles reversed; he, Chaptel, the officer. Lespart here in the kitchen listening to the planning of a cold blooded murder. What would Lespart have done? Done? He would have stood up and denounced the whole group for what they were: scum.

Caution whispered: If you talk, they'll kill you. Not one of them would hesitate to plunge a knife in *your* belly. If you talk, you'll get yourself killed, and will not change the course of events a bit. And if you keep silent, and warn the lieutenant, no matter where you go, they'll get you. And the lieutenant, too. One word of protest now, and all those sinister faces would turn toward him. He would be singled out, a marked man, without a chance from that moment. His body would be found by the outer fence. No one would talk, that would be the end of it.

If he told Lespart—Lespart took everything concerning danger with utter calm. He would not realize the gravity of the danger. Lespart was of a courageous breed, was brave alone, in the dark, a bravery distinct from that of Duval, who was brave before an audience, not so brave without spectators. One was a gentleman, the other a bandit. Of the two, whom did Chaptel resemble the most? It all hung on his decision tonight.

It seemed useless to interfere. Don Quixote jousting with windmills was sane compared to Chaptel if he challenged the gang.

His mouth felt dry; his scalp prickled. He was half sick with fear at the mere thought of speaking. He would never find the strength.

"Let's have a drink on it," Duval said.

Chaptel accepted the bottle, placed his lips where the others' lips had just been, and swallowed. Absinthe, almost undiluted. A dazzling light came into his soul: That night, in Ain Saffra, when Charles and Bibi had found him, he had had courage, false courage, true, but enough to risk anything. Here, in the glass container, was bottled bravery, a bravery often despised. But not finding it within himself to be brave when sober, what was Chaptel to do? He coughed once or twice, but drank on. At length Duval took the bottle from him, held it up to the candle, marking the level with his thumb.

"And I thought you could be trusted with a bottle!"

Chaptel silently rubbed his stomach, already warm.

Oh, that the stuff might blaze in his veins, so that he could throw away his life without regret, without fear, as Lespart would have done, sober. Chaptel plus absinthe equals one Lespart! A strange addition, thought Chaptel. For a Lespart minus absinthe did not make Chaptel, contrary to the old school rule that a subtraction proved the total of an addition.

A sort of gaiety came to him. And while the others conversed in low tones he sang:

"*Pendant que chantait la fauvette,*
Ils s'en allaient, les amoureux—

While the warblers were singing,
The lovers went their way."

He felt immensely sentimental, lonely as the broad ocean. He recalled his mother, his father. Poor folks, they had brought him into the world, watched him fondly, coddled him, raised him to manhood. And all that would be made useless tonight, when he talked. He recalled, foolishly enough, the deep hole where he learned to swim, shaded by willows with the gaunt poplars standing against the brilliant sky, majestic and complacent. Of all trees, poplars were nearest humans.

"Bravo, Chaptel!" Duval applauded. "After you leave here you can go into opera."

"I may not leave here," Chaptel declared with a grin.

He was enjoying the joke. He alone knew that he would not leave the camp, ever, unless one might call leaving the camp to go to the straggling row of crosses in the cemetery down the hill, where the native shepherd lads occasionally came to prove their disrespect of Christians.

Christians! Here they were, twenty odd Christians, Knaves of Spades. What a pretty opinion of a race they gave the natives! What a wise thing for France to do, sending her wayward sons to represent her in the Algerian hills. Edification of European virtues for the Moslem natives. Brilliant, brilliant!

He had stopped singing, but another had picked up. And Chaptel having given the mood, the usual entertainment of filthy ballads was forgotten. The big fellow in the far corner chanted in a not unpleasant bass, something about two white oxen marked with red, a familiar peasant song.

The cook produced a last bottle, which was offered to Chaptel in his turn. He gripped it eagerly, and added to the supply of courage, of warm courage hiding in his stomach.

Duval lifted his hand for attention.

"The meeting will break up in twenty minutes. I've got to go back to the lock-up before they change guards. Is everything agreed upon? The cook to supply the knife, two to start the fight, and Woolen-Leg to do the heavy work. Lespart must go."

He looked about him, and then asked the question invariably asked by all confident *costauds*, the question that Chaptel had been waiting for.

"That's what I say! Who says different!"

CHAPTEL rose to his feet.

"I do!" he shouted.

Duval's first reaction was in in the nature of an anti-climax. The expected tigerish leap, the thump of fists against his flesh—nothing came. The Slicer did not even get up. He smiled broadly, winked at the others.

"Kid," he said solemnly, "you're soused as a Pole."

"Not so soused that I can't tell you that I'm fed up with your apache ways," Chaptel retorted. "But soused enough to knock your head off. Come ahead, *costaud!*"

But the Slicer persisted in taking the affair as a joke. He laughed gently.

"Go to bed. You don't know what you're saying. I should have known better than to let you in on this. Usually, no guy gets in who hasn't been here years. By that time, there's nothing yellow left in them."

"Knifing a man in cold blood is a dirty thing. You fellows can't do it while I'm alive."

"Listen to the kid, will you!" exclaimed Duval. "You'd never think he once was ready to bayonet a man for me, would you?"

Chaptel feared that if the discussion were prolonged his nerve would fail him. He decided to hurry matters and have it over with. He was willing to be annihilated, but not to endure long suspense. There is a word in French to describe Duval's profession: A sad calling, not easily forgiven by men, but counting among its followers such distinguished names as that of the Duke of Marlborough, victor of Blenheim. Chaptel knew that to speak this word would precipitate the conflict.

"I was green, then, I didn't know what you were, Slicer. You dirty *souteneur!*"

In a single move, Duval was on his feet and lunging forward. Chaptel put up his hands, and with an uncertain sentiment of happiness welling within him, made ready for the shock. But the cook had launched his fat figure between Duval and Chaptel, somehow entangling the apache's arms in his.

"Not so fast! I'm responsible for this shack and what's in it. When you've schemed for years to get a job like this, you don't risk losing it."

"Let go of me, let go of me," Duval panted, trying to throw him off.

"Not much!"

The two were careening dangerously near the racks where the sergeant's china was kept. The Slicer had kept sufficient control of himself not to hurt the cook, and reluctantly drew back.

"It's got to be settled tonight," he said. Then added to the others: "That's gratitude. I've been easy with the kid, thought he was green. There he goes and sticks up for that —— Lespart!"

"The sergeants are drunk. Messaoud's on guard. What's to keep you from going back of the tents?" asked the cook.

"In the dark?"

The cook threw open a shutter, indicated the brilliant moonlight.

"All right. Send some one out to warn Messaoud."

A man left, and returned in a few seconds. Corporal Messaoud promised to give orders to the *Turcos* that the prisoners should not be interfered with unless they passed camp limits.

"You've got to be back in irons when the guards change," suggested Woolen-Leg. "I'll handle him."

"Not much. Messaoud will fix that, too. Let's go!"

They trooped out, heedless of the uproar they caused. As they passed the sergeant's quarters, the cook perfunctorily looked in, and turned away satisfied.

"That was a good brew!" he said proudly.

Behind the row of tents, between the shelters and the hedge of spiny bushes enclosing the camp was a spacious clearing, the place once used as a football field. Somehow, the men in the tents had learned, or scented something important about to happen. The *Turcos*, rifles in hand, leisurely approached, herding the swelling crowd before them. No one conceded Chaptel an outside chance against the powerful Duval, but to see the apache in action, any man would have foregone a night's sleep.

Duval, teeth set, took off his coat and shirt, spat in his hands. Chaptel imitated him swiftly, knowing that the other would not be above taking advantage of any delay on his part.

The wind was cold and blew across Chaptel's chest and face. He felt the vapors of absinthe clearing from his brain, yet exulted to find himself uncringing, ready. He faced his opponent, fists clenched, head low, watching the heavy-booted feet.

To his, and every one's surprize, the Slicer did not repeat his famous onslaught. He appeared to respect Chaptel's ability as a fighter, unproved though he was. Evidently he recalled the sergeant's prediction that the younger man would be *costaud*.

Chaptel did not wish to attack, to uncover himself. What slim chance he had, he would not throw away. To rush a man as agile and powerful as Duval would be imbecility. So, for a full minute, the two circled around each other.

Then Duval sprang forward.

Chaptel bent at the waist, evaded the flaying fists, and shot both hands to Duval's face. He did not know how to deliver a punch, had no particular skill in boxing, but the sheer weight of his muscular body was sufficient to bring the apache to a stop, and drive him off balance. Chaptel followed up the advantage with several blows to the head. Under his tightly bunched knuckles he felt the flesh give way. He threw caution to the wind, and dived in.

The Slicer who had never given ground before any man he had fought, did not now. He leaned forward, bore the punches and threw his fists against Chaptel blindly. And the younger man was amazed to find, that although the punches hurt, they did not have the withering power he had expected. He instinctively felt that he was having the better of the exchange. They stood head to head, swinging their arms, the blows drumming dully.

Very soon, Chaptel lost consciousness of the punishment he was undergoing, and knew only that he was hitting Duval with every move. The forgotten lore of his boyhood fights came to him. He took a step backward, and as Duval shuffled forward, struck him behind the left ear. Duval rocked, almost fell. Chaptel felt hands gripping at his shoulders, knew that the apache was trying to throw him down. He broke clear. Then Duval kicked out viciously, a long side kick aimed at the spot immediately below the knee cap. Chaptel sprang away lightly.

Again they circled. The Slicer rushed. Chaptel leaned back, lashing with a right-hand blow. Duval vanished from his vision. He felt a terrific smash against his ribs and reeled back. A kick—Duval had landed a kick. His breath pained him. His head was not clear.

Duval, scrambling on all fours along the ground, gripped his ankles and threw him down, himself rising immediately to a favorable position for another kick. But Chaptel sensed the danger, concentrated his energy into effort and was up and out of his way.

"Watch his feet, Chaptel," some one advised.

Chaptel needed no such recommendation. The one kick had come near to being the end. He was aware that once down, he was lost. Duval knew too many tricks of that game for a novice to hope to cope with him. When the next kick came, Chaptel was ready. He seized the heel, pushed upward, and before Duval could rise found time to stamp several times upon his torso.

"Fall on him! Get his eyes!"

Chaptel recognized the cook's voice. His successful stand had already gained him a following. Duval was feared but not deeply liked. To see him humiliated by a youngster whom he had scorned would please his victims, the *ex-costauds*.

Duval, on his feet again, staggered back, holding his stomach. Then he fell on his knees. Chaptel eager to finish the fight, rushed forward, his eyes on the muscular neck where he would press his knee. But

Duval suddenly gripped him around the knees and threw him. Having learned that Chaptel was as quick as he, he did not let him rise, but squirmed his body about holding him close. For a long panting moment, the two lay, head to feet, one on the other. The Slicer was obviously afraid to release his hold to seek a better one. Chaptel had one hand free. His quicker mind gave him the edge. He grasped Duval's ankle, and twisted.

Duval screamed in a muffled way, loosened his grip, dug the ground up with his nails, kicked out and freed himself. The two were up at the same time, and the slow circling began again.

Of the two, Chaptel was the thinker.

While Duval tried for a few simple finishing holds, Chaptel was planning his battle with method. In the moonlight he could see the Slicer's tattooed chest heaving, his flanks working like bellows. The fast pace was telling on him.

Chaptel, therefore, made a running fight of it. He had suddenly remembered that Duval ate heavily and drank more than his share. The dainties prepared for him by the cook would be his ultimate undoing. If Chaptel could make the apache run after him, the fight was his. The Slicer's vicious habits would do the rest. He wondered why no one had ever thought of this before.

But this turn did not please the crowd. He was roundly cursed for his apparent cowardice. But he held to his plan. Duval pursued him doggedly, swinging his arms, kicking out. Chaptel watched him closely, did not try to retaliate and saved his strength. At one time he even turned his back frankly, and dodged away. This was comical, and the spectators became hilarious. Messaoud applauded—

"*Kif-kif oiseau*—the same as a bird!"

"He'll catch him—he won't catch him—he'll catch him—he won't catch him," chanted a wit.

This was more amusing than any one had a right to expect. A comedy with a certain tragic ending. The grotesque appealed to the distorted minds. Duval was raging and swearing. When he halted for breath, Chaptel teased him with faint rushes, kept him always on the move. The massive apache was drenched with perspiration.

His running gradually wore down to a trot. His arms swung with less vigor. When a blow did reach Chaptel he felt it merely as an ungentle tap. The sting was gone.

Then Chaptel set to work.

He aimed at Duval's nose, pumped smashes into the sore spot as fast as he could. He felt the warmth of blood on his fingers. He shifted to the eyes and pounded away. The Slicer made a few ineffectual passes with his feet, almost tumbling with the effort. He groaned and spat blood.

"Kick him, kid," advised Woolen Leg, shamelessly passing into the winning side.

Chaptel found a savage pleasure in battering that formidable face. He pounded the protruding jaw from all angles, sharpshooting at the bobbing head as a marksman aims at a bottle in the water. Duval's tremendous vitality alone kept him on his feet.

Tired, Chaptel paused. Duval stood in place, arms down, head forward, punch-drunk.

"Had enough?"

"No."

Duval somehow found strength to swing his arms. Chaptel brushed them aside and continued to rain blows. He was beginning to sicken. But he could not leave Duval on his feet unless he admitted himself beaten and pleaded for mercy.

At last, the Slicer sank to his knees. Pitilessly, Chaptel leaped on his back, pressed him to earth, bore down with his knee against the neck, holding Duval by the ears and rubbing his face into the ground. When Duval stopped struggling, he arose, and wiped his hands on his trouser leg. He believed the fight was over. But Duval got up on his hands, then to his knees. He stood.

This was a ghastly nightmare. Chaptel had to push him down again. He remembered how he had once liked the Slicer. His old feeling of friendship began to return. Again, he rubbed the raw face into the soil, and released him. Again Duval got up. The magnificent courage of the man, the courage he had often doubted, appalled him. He wanted to flee from this sullen determination more than he had wanted to flee from death.

"Where is he?" mumbled Duval. With both eyes blackened, he could not see.

"I'm here, Duval. You better stop."

Duval tottered forward.

"I'll get you yet!"

Chaptel could not summon the will power

to strike him again. He threw him down heavily. Duval struck the ground with a sickening thud, sprawled out, bloody face to the moon, and lay still.

Satisfied, Chaptel found his shirt and coat and donned them.

When he turned again, Duval had rolled on his stomach, was hoisting himself up again. A sort of hush had come over the crowd. They watched without a word of mocking or encouragement. How many times would Duval arise?

Blind rage swept Chaptel. He ran forward, leaped upon his beaten enemy and flattened him out. Then, once again he gripped the ears. But instead of rubbing the head sidewise, he bumped it on the hard soil. Once begun, he could not stop. The nervous strain had snapped his common sense of decency. Duval must not get up again, that was all he remembered.

No one interfered.

At length Chaptel stepped away, half-expecting to see that persistent dragging movement. But the Slicer was done, done for that night at any rate. Several minutes went by and he did not stir, but lay sprawled out, face down. Messaoud approached curiously—

"He croaked?"

Chaptel shrugged. Then he gestured again, to indicate that all was over. The cook ran forward.

"I hope he isn't killed," he said. "They'd find out I let him loose."

He turned the Slicer upon his back. Duval's jaw had dropped upon his chest. From the mouth flowed blood and saliva. The cook pressed his ear against his chest, held up one hand for silence. He looked up at Chaptel with a grin.

"He'll do."

"Do you think he's hurt much?" Chaptel wondered anxiously.

"Him? You've got to kill a man like that to hurt him. He'll be all right tomorrow, and in three weeks his face will be as good as it ever was." Then he added, judiciously, "Which ain't saying much."

He called to Woolen-Leg and another man.

"Help me carry him to the lockup and put the irons back on him."

Woolen-Leg laughed.

"What's the idea?" Chaptel asked.

"I'm thinking of the face on Bichet, tomorrow when he sees how Duval beat himself up, all alone, with claws and paws in iron bracelets!"

In spite of his disgust and weariness, Chaptel smiled. He was worried about Duval. He dipped a handkerchief in water, washed the apache's face. Then he tried to revive him. But Duval had taken so long to lose consciousness he seemed to demand an equal length to recover. Neither beating in his palms, throwing water over his head or the uncorked flask of ammonia produced by the cook, had effect.

And so Chaptel was forced to abandon him on the hard sloping planking that served as mattress in the lockup, with his wrists and ankles circled with irons.

The cook had waited outside.

"Come over to the kitchen. I guess you want to talk to us."

Chaptel's speech was brief and to the point.

"You know what the fight was about. You better forget it. I won't interfere with you on anything else, for the moment. But what I say goes from now on. Who says different?"

He waited. No answer came.

IN LESPART'S absence, Bichet drank all day and the longer part of the night.

And the lieutenant returned unexpectedly.

From another prisoner Chaptel heard what happened.

"Old man, when the Striper came in, Duval was roaring with fever.

" 'What ails that man?' the lieutenant asked.

" 'I don't know,' Bichet says.

" 'You don't know! Have you made your rounds regularly, Sergeant-Major?'

"Bichet kind of laughed.

" '*Mon Lieutenant*,' he says, astonished-like, 'am I the man to neglect my duties?'

" 'No, no, I can't say that,' the Striper pipes up. 'Bring a light. I think he's sick.'

"It was as dark as a nigger's pocket in there. I hear Bichet fool with a lantern. I see a match fuse up. I knew how Duval must look, so I didn't waste time looking at his mug, but kept my eyes on the officer. You know those eyes of his? They seemed to leap out of his head, like. And that funny wisp of hair he calls a mustache stood up like bayonets on parade.

" '*Nom de Dieu*, Sergeant-Major, is this Duval?'

"You'd have laughed to see Bichet. His jaw dropped and those black teeth of his looked like a stump fence. He licked his lips.

" 'I think it is, *mon Lieutenant*.'

" 'He's been beaten,' the Striper goes on.

"Then I looked at Duval, and I almost laughs out loud. I don't know whether it was the cold made it worse, but Duval's face was all swollen and puffed. He looked as if he was sprouting mushrooms of different colors. You must have busted something high in his nose, because it kept leaking blood. The Striper looked as if he was going to fall down crying.

" 'It's a crime, an abomination!' he bellows.

"And I thought for a minute he was going to wallop Bichet. The sergeant stepped back.

" 'I didn't do it,' he says.

" 'You didn't do it?' Lespart picks up. 'You didn't do it! Who did then? Not the other prisoners. They're in irons. You're the only man who has the keys, Sergeant-Major!'

"Bichet was a sight. He couldn't say he had got drunk on duty, and let the keys get away from him. And unless he said that, he stood out as the guy who had lambasted Duval.

" 'It's disgusting to beat a defenseless man,' the Striper said sharply. 'You unspeakable swine, it's men of your sort that give the army a bad name!'

"Bichet could only roll his eyes and say—

" '*Mon Lieutenant! Mon Lieutenant!*'

"Then the Striper turned to me.

" 'You saw the Sergeant-Major do this?'

" 'I did not, Lieutenant,' I says. 'It was too dark to see anything.'

" 'Did you hear anything?'

" 'No, I sleep sound, Lieutenant.'

" 'Facts speak for themselves,' the Striper said, and called for water, and washed Duval's face. He kept swearing under his breath.

" 'You hit him with a club,' he accused Bichet. 'Don't say different. These aren't fist blows. The poor fellow's in pain.'

" 'Give him morphine,' suggested Bichet, eager to say something.

" 'No, he's excited, delirious. I fear he has concussion or a fracture of the skull. The best thing is to send him to the hospital. Poor fellow, he'll only get out of bed to face court martial. As for you, Bichet, you'll be thrown out of the army. And if this man dies I'll see that you get yours.'

"They took the irons off Duval. Four men came in to take him out of the lock up. He was still raving."

"He was raving when they put him in the wagon to go to Ain Saffra," Chaptel put in. "Bichet went with him."

"That's a good one on the sergeant-major!"

"Yes," Chaptel agreed. "Funny thing how accounts are squared."

Later, news came from Ain Saffra.

Duval, under treatment, had recovered quickly. He had refused to make an accusation. Nevertheless, the evidence against Bichet was sufficient to cause the non-com's dismissal from the Army. Duval, himself, stood trial for breaking a man's arm. The court martial condemned him to an additional two years in a military penitentiary. At Lespart's request, he was sent to another camp, on the desert border. These two years, added to the five he had drawn for striking Marietti, gave a total of seven. As he had already served two years in the battalion, and five in the pen for a former offense, his minimum stay in Algeria would be fourteen years. And if he met another Marietti, he would never get out.

There were moments when Chaptel wondered if his career would not parallel that of the Slicer.

Gradually he had acquired the swagger and insolence of the *costaud*. Although he never took money from his subjects, he drifted into lazy habits at the expense of the others. Another man made his bed, a second washed his clothes, a third hunted fleas and lice in his garments. When the work was not to his liking, he meted out punishment, but without Duval's brutality.

He had drawn away from Lespart. He could not afford to be thought overfriendly with the officer.

Sometimes at night, after an altercation with a weaker man, he feared to close his eyes, strained his hearing to catch the rustle across the tent floor which would warn him of a stealthy approach. He came to know the cold fear of a knife. Often he awoke suddenly, and brought his hands down to protect his belly. He spent glorious, half-mad, half-drunk hours, gloating over his power, making the men perform antics for his amusement.

He had experienced bad moments when his authority was challenged, and feet and fists were brought into play.

His previous life sank into the background, was forgotten.

Whole months rolled by, and he did not write home. What was he to write? Could he give his parents details of his intimate life? Was there anything in his existence that would bear the telling to his mother? Could he write:

"Yesterday, a man refused to clean my shirt, therefore I beat him?"

More and more he learned to speak in the slang of the pen. Words that had once shocked him were the only ones that came to mind when he desired to express himself. A quart of wine, a cigaret, nothing to do—that was his ideal. He had occasional concern about his physical condition. The others worked on the rock-pile. Lespart still allowed him to do lighter tasks about the camp. His biceps, once hard and springy, were flabby. The skin did not seem to stretch over the muscles. Around his waist, rolls of fat appeared.

Some night, he knew, there would come an answer to his query—

"Any one says different?"

The man would be strong, hard, ambitious. And Chaptel would go down, to take his place among the lowly, to shrink at a word, to kill fleas in another man's shirt.

But the fear was not great enough to make him work.

He lost consciousness of the passing of time. One day was like another. Twice, Lespart went on leave. Twice, he came back. A year and a half had passed since Duval's departure.

Eighteen months—counting his time in the battalion, he had been in Algeria twenty-two months. When he next entered the barber's shack to have his head shaved, he paused before the mirror, and removed his long-visored cap.

His face was lined, soggy. There was resolution, but little intelligence. He was startlingly like any other convict. Now, the doctor would not say that he was different from the rest. What a mug! His mother would have doubted his identity. Had he seen such a face in France, he would have exclaimed—

"Jail-bird!"

What fear could not do, a remnant of vanity accomplished. That night he made his own bed, examined his own shirt, refused the wine offered him.

Resolutely he closed his eyes and tried to forget the possibility of the knife. He must first conquer that particular fear, the fear that showed in his face. It was an uphill fight against habit—the hardest for a man to win. And he won. The change in his appearance attracted attention. He was chaffed about his cleanliness, and he managed to allow the jokes to pass unpunished.

LESPART, some time later, pausing near him briefly, encouraged him.

"I was giving up hope, Chaptel. You were going under—fast. I was seriously thinking of sending you to the rock-pile for the good of your soul. What came over you? No matter. You're pulling up. Good work."

"Thank you, Lieutenant. I believe I had the prevailing disease, lack of interest in life."

"Discouraged, eh? You know, it's the most heartening thing to see you recover."

Chaptel had served twenty-four months in the pen when Lespart called him into his office. The officer was smiling, and patting a paper spread before him on the desk.

"Your case never seemed quite clear to me. I wrote to the authorities in Ain Saffra, and asked for an investigation. The civil authorities looked up Charles and Bibi. Addresses found on them were traced, letters found. Duval had written his friends about his quarrel with Marietti, hinting that Marietti's removal would please him. He wrote, in so many words, that you, Chaptel, would point out Marietti to the two men, but that you would not help them if you knew their full intent. As is well established by your trial, you withdrew when you understood the criminal plans of Charles and Bibi.

Marietti himself said you were not quite sober the night of the attack. He saw you at the music-hall. My superiors have agreed with me that your case can bear correction. I am practically certain that your sentence will be lifted within a few months. I think you may be expected to serve a few months in the battalion. Of that I am not quite sure. The petition signed by the major, the doctor and myself, is before the Commander in Chief. You are aware how slowly such matters are attended to. But I can almost promise that you'll be out of this camp in two months, and home in eighteen."

Chaptel groped for a chair. His cap fell to the floor. He held his head in his hands. Lespart, more touched than he liked to admit, breathed noisily, coughed, laid a hand on his shoulder.

"What the ——, 3039! That's nothing to cry over!"

"How would you feel toward a man who had pulled you out of a quicksand?"

"I'd promise him not to jump in again."

"That's promised," Chaptel assured him. "I'm going to be a man some day, thanks to you. If you ever need that man, Lieutenant, ask for him."

"I'll make a confession to you, Chaptel. I'm getting as much joy out of this as you. You don't believe it? Just try to play Providence for some one, some time!"

Chaptel straightened up, as he recalled that one night when he had played Providence for Lespart. His debt had been paid in advance. And Lespart had helped him without knowing any cause for his generosity.

The two men shook hands, and Chaptel left, feeling as if he treaded on air.

He sought his tools, but his trembling hands refused service. He was filled with sentiments which defied expression. He wanted to shout, sing. His head still swam with emotion when five o'clock came.

The cook emerged from his shack, waddled majestically toward him with a bucket filled with potatoes.

"Help me peel these," he suggested.

"Sure," Chaptel agreed, wondering what he had to say.

They worked in silence for a few minutes.

"Six new *Turcos* have come to reinforce the guards," the cook volunteered. "One of them brought a letter to Messaoud, who gave it to me to give to you. I guess the guy who sent it didn't want it read by the officer. Otherwise he could have mailed it." The cook cast a cautious glance about. "I'll slip it in the bucket. You take it out, casual like."

Chaptel did as he was directed, secreted the envelope in his tunic. He put a two franc piece in the bucket.

"Give to the *Turco* this."

The cook turned away, but Chaptel saw that he licked his lips. He knew what proportion of the tip would reach the Turco. The two franc coin would melt to a twenty-five centime piece in the journey.

As soon as the night meal was over and Chaptel was alone, he took out the envelope. The message was not signed. It was badly written, sprinkled with mistakes in spelling. When deciphered into normal French, it ran as follows:

> EDMOND:
>
> I made a friend of you when I had nothing to gain and much to lose by doing so. Remember how I taught you to clean your things in barracks?
>
> You ended our friendship in a cruel way. You humiliated me before everybody, for the love of a man who was not even one of us. Remember that if I had given the word, everybody would have piled on you and finished you. I wanted to go easy with you, not hurt you much, just enough to knock some sense into you. You tricked me and won in a disloyal way.
>
> I got two years in this —— of a place and it has made me bitter. If you thought I'd forget, you're wrong. You probably told the Striper that you didn't want me in camp. I was forced out of a good camp to this hot place, which is ten thousand times worse than up in the hills.
>
> I write you now because some of the *Turcos* are going to your camp. It's the first chance I have had to tell you what I think of you. This place is breaking up. We've finished laying the telegraph wires as far as Isallah. I know I'll be sent back to the old camp. And when I get there you'll be the sixth. I warn you ahead of time so you'll know why it happened. I'll sleep easier after I've got you, you ——, you false friend, you hypocrite, you ——, etc."

Chaptel folded the paper, then as an afterthought set a match to it. Duval coming back—soon—

What could he do?

THE next morning Chaptel went to Lespart.

"Lieutenant," he said. "I would like to be transferred."

The officer seemed taken aback. Doubtless he could not reconcile this request with his own announcement the previous afternoon.

"How? Where? Why? You come and fire demands at me without explanation. Recall that a transfer at this time will complicate the procedure to free you."

"I wish to be sent to another camp, anywhere. I don't care much as long as it's away from here. I have private reasons for wanting this, Lieutenant."

"I have no doubt," Lespart agreed gently. "But how do you expect me to know if you don't tell me? Come on, talk—you and I are alone, no one will hear you."

"I can not talk."

Lespart pushed his *kepi* to the back of his head and grinned. He slapped the desk jovially.

"Some inside stuff that messieurs the prisoners do not want noised abroad, eh, Chaptel? You had a quarrel with some one? I will transfer you to another tent. That's the limit of my power until I am able to pass on the necessary papers. You see the camp in the south is breaking up, and contingents from it are overflowing into other establishments. It would be a difficult matter to convince the authorities that you should be transferred, merely on a whim. There's no two ways about this: Either you tell me who has threatened you or I can do nothing."

Chaptel saluted.

"I understand, Lieutenant," he assured the officer. Then he shifted to a routine matter.

"May I have 1106 to help me today?"

Lespart filled out an order for the sergeant in charge of 1106—alias Gautier, alias Woolen-Leg—to permit that man to assist Chaptel for the day.

Although the cook had preserved a vague hostility toward Chaptel, Woolen-Leg had proved his loyalty, backing the new *costaud* with the authority of his long term of service in the camps. Between the veteran convict and Chaptel a friendship had grown, a sort of mutual respect, a tacit agreement to keep the others under control. On the fine points of penitentiary etiquette, Woolen-Leg was matchless.

And so, that afternoon, Chaptel broached the subject.

"Duval's coming back up here."

"Then you better watch out. He may be sore over that hiding you gave him. He's a mean bird that way."

"He wrote me a letter. Says he'll knife me. Do you think he means it?"

"He does. There's only one thing to do: Get him first."

"I couldn't bring myself to to do that."

Woolen-Leg shrugged, whistled softly, and went on with his work. He did not press his point. Asked for his advice, he had given counsel. This being disregarded he had no further concern in the matter.

"Will it do any good for me to change tents?" Chaptel asked after a pause.

"What's a few yards more or less to go when you're after a man? As for the *Turcos*, you know as well as I do, whether they'd interfere with Duval."

"I'm half tempted to make a clean breast of the whole business to the lieutenant. He might do something then."

Woolen-Leg looked at him coldly.

"That wouldn't help much. He might jail Duval, or transfer you. But you'd get yours just the same, because it wouldn't be Duval alone that would be after you, but all of us. Me with the rest."

"Why? What choice is left with me?"

"Why? You give Duval away, and indirectly it may lead to exposing all of us, the Spades. That's why." Woolen-Leg chuckled. "Talk if you want. No one ever got away with it. Look at this."

He drew a newspaper clipping from his pocket, torn from a French provincial paper.

A former member of the battalion had been killed, knifed through the back, in the café he owned. Woolen-Leg produced other clippings. Evidently he had a methodical turn of mind as well as a keen interest in the subject.

"They talked, that's what," he explained. "This affair of yours is between Duval and yourself. Don't make it spread."

"I won't!" Chaptel announced heartily. "This Knaves of Spades business is like putting your finger in cog wheels."

Woolen-Leg did not reply. Again, Chaptel took the initiative.

"I won't get Duval," he said firmly. "I can't get out of here by talking to Lespart, that's understood. There remains one other way—escape."

"To the coast? The gendarmes would nab you before you got far. You're a European, and can't go through native villages unnoticed. I'll bet you don't speak a phrase of Arabic."

"I don't. Who'd have taught me? The *Turcos?* But we're near Morocco. Once clear of the camp, a night's fast march, and I'd be over the border."

"Then what?"

"I'd gain Tangiers, then America."

"Just like that—" Woolen-Leg exclaimed mockingly. "Do you know what happens to men who try to get away through Morocco? No? The fellows over there chop them up. No joke. Me—me who's talking to you, I saw with these two eyes, the bodies of a bunch of boys from the Foreign Legion who had deserted, with *arms and ammunition*, nine of them. Not far from this place, just this side of the border, on what is officially French ground. Those nine boys were armed and could fight, veterans, with medals. They just went crazy, the way Legionaires do, and beat it. How many Moroccans they got, no one knows. But in the end——"

"I guess I couldn't make it."

"Guess you couldn't. Do you know what escape means? Thirst, sun, madness, capture. Then an extra term for trying to get away." Woolen-Leg paused reminiscently. "I tried it once."

"When?"

"A few years ago. A fellow was coming back to camp to get me. I got frightened. Used to dream of him at night. Couldn't stand it any longer. But I didn't dare kill him. At the time, I had never killed nobody. It's the first one that counts. I managed to steal a bayonet from a *Turco*. Another fellow came along, with a clasp knife. You know how hard it would be to get out of here? Well, that other place, down near the desert, was worse. We did it, though."

"How?"

"Who can tell? We were crazy. No one saw us go. We walked all night and slept in the bushes all the next day. The patrols looking for us passed not twenty yards away. With darkness, we managed to steal a couple of blankets from the natives in a village. They were pretty white and at a distance could pass for *burnous*. We had to bury our uniform caps and go bareheaded. We didn't dare go near the water holes. They were watched. Eat? Nothing much. A couple of dates, that's all. Enough to keep an Arab alive, but not one of us.

"After a week, stealing a chicken here, a piece of meat there, and once in a while a drink, we were so tired and hot we could hardly stand. My feet were swollen and bleeding and we had sores on our legs from walking through spines. Then we got almost caught by a native *goum*—native auxiliary cavalry—and had to hide two days. Then we found an old guy, an Arab, with a little boy, watching sheep near a well. The old boy held his gun on us and told us we'd have to pay for food. I managed to ask if we could have water out of the well for nothing. He said no. Yet it wasn't his well. It was everybody's. Can you picture anything as mean as that?

"I got sort of crazy then, and jumped him, gun and all. The thing went off, and tore half my right calf away. But I put the bayonet through his belly. My pal had caught the kid. When I turned he was laughing, with the boy across his lap, throat cut, and his eyes looked backward at me! We drank until we near busted. Then we threw both down the well, with stones and sand in their clothing. After, we killed a sheep and ate a lot, cooking the meat over the old man's fire. It was only when I began to feel sick to my stomach and weak all over that I bandaged that hole in my leg with rags.

"The other fellow was for staying with the sheep near the well. He couldn't think of nothing else. I knew that somebody was bound to come and look for the old guy and the kid, and said we'd move on. We filled a skin from the well—maybe it was imagination, but I thought it tasted of blood—cut big hunks of meat from the sheep, and went on.

"I managed to crawl, bum leg and all. The other fellow got crazier and crazier. One night he tried to kill me with his clasp knife, shouting that I was the kid come back. I beat him up, and left him there. I was fed up with trying to escape, and gave myself up. When they looked for the other fellow, he was dead. Starvation and hardship, they said. I drew down an extra year."

"What about the fellow who wanted to knife you?"

"Oh, him? I got him first. Nobody ever knew. That's how it worked out."

"You've seen a lot of things in your time, Woolen-Leg," Chaptel said, flattering him. "If you were in my shoes and didn't want to get Duval, what *would* you do?"

"You can mutilate yourself, cut off a finger, put out an eye—swallow germs given you by another fellow who's sick."

Chaptel shuddered.

"You can take a wallop at one of the sergeants, or at Lespart. You'll get sent down for trial But both ways bring you back here after a while, and put off the time when you got to face Duval. There's another way, but you might not care to take it. Get some sharp instrument, wound a sergeant. Then there's a big trial, and maybe ten or fifteen years hard labor in Guiana. Guiana is no worse than here, after all, except that the climate is —— rotten. And a lot of guys escape from there, too. Many more than from here. There escape is easy."

"Ten or fifteen years—escape easy——"

"Then, there's the trip. It's a big change. You see the sea. You see South America. Some people pay money to travel like that. But—" Woolen-Leg compelled himself to an honest statement—"it's touch and go. Sometimes when you wound a sergeant, the court martial's stiff-necked, and calls it military rebellion, arms in hands. Then you're stood up against a wall."

"My chief aim is to keep alive. Otherwise I'd wait for Duval. I'd be willing to serve fifteen, twenty years, rather than get the Slicer's sticker in my guts. You said you dreamed about it. So do I. It gets me sweating in the night, all of a sudden, just thinking. You know how it is."

"We lead a life not fit for a dog, yet we like to keep on. Always hoping for a miracle—as if we didn't know we're due to croak here."

"Did you ever know any one who got away from Guiana?"

"One fellow, from here, I knew. I got a post card from Argentina. He's a sailor now. And a fellow in my tent has a brother in New York—you know, in the United States—who skipped out after seven months."

"There's such a thing as extradition," Chaptel protested.

"Not for small fry. You're no celebrated apache, or a well-to-do crook who murders his girl. Your photograph won't be around in every paper in the world for every cow to look at. Neither will you be branded as a dangerous criminal. You're just a poor bum that got away. They're almost sure to say good riddance."

Chaptel was tempted.

"No use," he said at length. "I won't risk the firing squad."

"I don't blame you. I—" Woolen-Leg broke off suddenly and smote his forehead—"I got it—wound a civilian! They can't call that rebellion. And you're good for ten years in Guiana."

"Not a bad idea. But where'll I find a civilian? None around here. And anyway I couldn't harm a poor fellow who had done me no harm."

"If you object to everything," Woolen-Leg blurted out, "how can I suggest anything? You want to get away, but you're not willing to do anything."

The conversation thus ended unsatisfactorily, and the two resumed work in silence.

It is imagined by free men that a human being, of average intelligence and normal instincts, would prefer death to a long prison term. It is also imagined by men in good health, that should they develop an incurable disease, they might resort to suicide, as a favor to themselves and to the universe. But the sick man clings to the hope of a cure, the prisoner to the possibility of escape or the miracle that will free him.

Chaptel decided, as had thousands before him, that life was worth living, regardless of the torturing features. He arrived at this conclusion not through a logical reasoning, but through instinct for self preservation, which seems to develop, rather than wilt, in hardships.

Escape from the Algerian camp seemed impossible. Woolen Leg's experience was but one of many. A single success he had heard of. A German youth, enlisted in the Foreign Legion, stranded in the convict's camp, had vanished on a certain night, and had been heard from six months later. It was said that the imperial consul in Algiers had spent a small fortune in bribes. But Chaptel had no such influence.

Should he be able to get to Guiana, there was a chance.

He calculated that Duval would return in perhaps two weeks. Rumors floating about the camp combined to give him that opinion. He had two weeks in which to reach a decision.

A week passed swiftly without new development.

The rabbit thrown in a boa constrictor's cage, a mouse between a cat's paws, doubtless undergo feelings similar to those Chaptel entertained while waiting for Duval. As inexorable as the shifting of day into night, was the persistent hatred of the apache. He knew the relentless patience of the breed. Duval could hold back his hand days, weeks, but eventually Chaptel's body would be dragged out into the sunlight some morning when he failed to answer roll-call.

HE lost his appetite, grew thin and haggard. He relaxed into his former slovenly ways. Lespart at first tried to be sympathetic, then seemed puzzled by the sullen silence. He remonstrated with Chaptel, even threatened with a term in irons. Then, he changed tactics again. Chaptel was summoned to the office.

"I may have been wrong in telling you of the prospect of freedom," the lieutenant said. "The reaction of the first moment of happiness is on you, that's all. Your nerves have snapped. You're impatient, you long to be out of camp, isn't that it?"

Chaptel who saw no purpose in denial, nodded mournfully.

"I have a plan," Lespart went on. "You've been around here several months without even walking as far as the rock-pile. You need a change. I'll take a chance. Give me your word of honor that you won't try to escape, and I'll send you down to the native village with Messaoud, to do the marketing for my table and the sergeants' mess. Corporal Messaoud will not watch you—he'll carry the basket. You're going for a stroll alone."

"Thank you, Lieutenant."

"I merely want to make one thing clear: Letting you out without authority from headquarters is against regulations. It will pass unnoticed if you behave yourself. If you don't, I'll be in hot water."

"You may trust me, Lieutenant."

"I know it." Lespart shoved three five-franc pieces across the desk. "Take these and get out. Have a good time. Here's the list of stuff you're to buy. Be careful of the eggs. Better let Messaoud inspect them before a light. I prefer my chicken somewhat older."

Flanked by the lanky Messaoud, who bore only the bayonet and a capacious basket, Chaptel passed, cigaret in lips, before the astonished sentry and strolled down the road toward the village.

There was no use denying freedom felt good, even this limited freedom. To try the sensation of going where he pleased, Chaptel left the main trail, followed by the imperturbable *Turco*. He grew drunk on the sense of being his "own man," of not having to glance over his shoulder for a watchful sergeant. Hands in pockets, jingling the three silver coins musically, he ambled along. He met the lad with the troop of goats, and bought a drink of fresh milk.

"You go down to the village often?" he asked Messaoud.

"Twice, maybe three times a week."

"You're a lucky man, Messaoud."

Messaoud did not quite understand. But he did not question. That was the good point of Messaoud. He gave one a sense of companionship yet did not interfere by foolish requests for information.

The village was not exactly a metropolis. Stone houses, brown roofs emerging from the rose-laurel hedges, a group of women coming back from the fountain at the foot of the hill, two or three children, and in a corner a white-bearded old man squatted in the sun, asleep. Save for the fleeting glimpses from the train windows on the journey from Algiers to Ain Saffra, this was Chaptel's first sight of a village. He forgot his misfortune to admire the picturesque aggregation.

Messaoud, who did not have the same reasons to pause, suggested that they shop first, then while he, Messaoud went to the café, Chaptel might look about at leisure. Chaptel consulted the list, and then sought out the woman who usually supplied the camp's military staff with fresh food.

Messaoud, although an Arab, spoke Berber with sufficient fluency to haggle over prices. He drove bargains as if acting in protection of his own purse, rather than in the interest of the government. He asked for a lantern and examined each and every egg of the three dozens bought. The woman argued, protested. Messaoud broke the egg in question and invariably proved his point.

From there they went to another house to see what the *Turco* corporal considered the most marvelous spectacle in the hills: A jeweller at work, pouring gold into a mold. Chaptel had lived in a section of France renowned for watch-making and jewelry, and saw nothing to admire, and asked Messaoud to take him to the café. Refusing the red wine offered by the native owner, he drank coffee and ate little cakes with an unutterable feeling of luxury. As the café also served as general store, he purchased chocolate for Messaoud. The owner of the café spoke a little French and Chaptel conversed with him.

The dialog consisted for the most part in questions and monosyllabic answers.

“You know Algiers?”

“Yes.”

“Nice city—big place—tram-cars.”

“Big place.”

“I come from France. Big place, too. No oranges. No dates. You been to France?”

“No.”

A pause. Then the inn-keeper asked—

“What they make place you come from?”

Chaptel reached out, pulled the watch from the sash-belt around the fat waist.

“Make these.”

“Yes?” The native rubbed his thigh placidly, then rose and disappeared within the shop, to return with a long-handled knife in an ornate leather sheath.

“What men pay for this in France?”

Chaptel examined the curio.

“Ten francs, maybe.”

“A man from Algiers, a European, is due here. They say he give me twelve francs, sometimes fifteen, for a blade like this.”

“Is it old?”

“Yes.”

“That’s why.”

“Old knife is worth more than new one, then?”

“Sometimes. Is the man from Algiers here now, in this village?”

“No. He comes this afternoon.”

“Soon?”

“Soon. Wants to buy knives, swords, rifles, all old.”

A collector of Kabylian antiques and home-made implements, Chaptel surmised. He must not miss him. It would do him good to talk to a man of his own race. He lighted a cigaret, stretched out on the mats, eyes shaded by the peak of his cap. Lespart had not told him to hasten, and he need not return until the six o’clock call.

He was willing to forego a meal to prolong this seeming liberty. The inn-keeper summoned his helper with a new pot of coffee, and squatted, gravely silent. Messaoud, relaxed and jovial, hummed to himself. On a roof not far away, a stork strutted, intensely white against the blue sky. Women laughed, in spite of the heavy water jugs balanced on their shoulders, and the sound was pleasing to Chaptel, starved as he was for the sound of laughter.

His day-dreaming was interrupted. Some one had come into the café. A European by the step. Chaptel rearranged his coat, placed his cap at the correct angle, wiped his shoes with a dingy handkerchief. This done he rose to his feet and faced the newcomer. The face beneath the panama hat was familiar.

“Eh, well! 3039! How are you?”

“Sergeant Bichet!”

“No, not Sergeant Bichet—Monsieur Bichet, if you please! You can not fail to recall that I was put out of the army, although I swear I didn’t do anything. Lespart still up there?”

“Yes.”

“Too bad. I’d have liked to have gone up and seen the boys, for old time’s sake. But he never took to me much, did he? How have you been? You look older. By the way, I remember your number but not your name.”

“Edmond Chaptel.”

“Yes. Well, as you see they did me a favor. At first I didn’t know quite what to do. In France, I had no luck. I came back to Algiers, got in touch with a firm that peddles stuff to tourists, told them I knew the lingo up here, and am on commission. Ten per cent. of the profits! Look!”

Bichet went into his pockets, produced a handful of bills and coin.

“A little better than fifty francs a month, what? And no stubborn —— to make life miserable for me. No weak sister to sympathize with the down-trodden prisoners.”

“I guess you found it a change all right,” Chaptel agreed. “Don’t you ever miss it? I remember you used to have a pretty good time with some of us.”

“Oh, that kidding the newcomers? I suppose you’re still a little sore about it. But —I don’t mean this for you—it’s necessary to get the jump on that cattle up there, or they’d walk all over you. Let’s see, what was the gag I pulled on you.”

“You asked me how many persons in God, Monsieur Bichet. And you put me in the pit where the sick man had been.”

“Didn’t hurt you much, did it? And you realized right away who was boss. Saved us a lot of fuss later. Now that I’m not an official, you see I’m not a bad fellow. Have a drink, Chaptel?”

“Sure.”

BICHET was not fond of coffee and a bottle of wine was substituted. Chaptel, suave and polite in appearance, was revolving thoughts that would have made the former non-com. uneasy. But Bichet was not a mind-reader.

"How long do you still have to serve?"

"A few years."

"Provided you live that long. I always thought you was mixed up with that Duval. Just an idea of mine. The gang sergeant told me you were thick with him at first. Oh, well, let's forget it. I'm a civilian now."

The word civilian struck an echoing chord in Chaptel. If he attacked a civilian he stood a fair chance of being sent to Guiana, to Guiana where men escaped to go to sea, or to settle down in New York.

Bichet was a civilian. Quite a coincidence. That night in the pit he had wondered how long it took a man to make a spoon-knife, and he had been thinking of Bichet.

He looked keenly at Bichet's pockets for a possible bulge denoting a revolver. He recalled that Marietti had carried one, and Bichet was of the same breed. But the ex-sergeant's pockets were reassuringly flat. And there was nothing to fear from his puny physical strength. He picked out the spot, on the low forehead, between the eyes, where he would send his fist crashing. But then a thought occurred—a beating with fists would not be sufficient. It might be called merely assault. He must wound the man, to make it appear an attempt at murder.

He glanced about, leaving Bichet to prattle on boastfully, narrating in detail several clever deals put through in this very village. There was, of course, the wine bottle, which would make a passable weapon. But it failed on two points. In one case, it might simply raise a bump on Bichet's head if the skull proved thick, or again crack that skull wide open.

Chaptel desired neither the firing squad nor the guillotine, and Bichet's death would mean one of the two. Strangling offered the same risk; too tight a squeeze and the former sergeant might pass out. A weak grip, and only finger marks.

Messaoud, after a grinning recognition of Bichet, had turned his back and was talking with the inn-keeper. His bayonet hilt protruded and was within easy reach. A swift lunge, the blade once in his hand, a thrust through the shoulder. But Messaoud was wiry, quick as a cat, and would prevent the appropriation of a weapon for which he was responsible. Then a better idea occurred to Chaptel.

"Pst—pst—Messaoud! Will you hand me that knife I was looking at? I want to show it to Monsieur Bichet who buys such things."

Messaoud had been turning the knife over and over in his hand, scraping his palm on the keen edge. Without looking around, he offered the weapon, and went on talking. Chaptel drew the blade from the sheath and gave the latter to Bichet for inspection.

"I'll look at it," Bichet agreed. "The old man'll probably want too much for it." He glanced at the weapon casually. Not a bad piece of work, though. You see we tell the value this way——"

Chaptel took a secure hold on the hilt, hesitated a last brief second. It must be done—sometimes men escaped from Guiana.

He struck.

Bichet stared, and uttered a short grunt. Not a loud grunt, for Messaoud did not even turn around. Chaptel drew the blade clear. Fearful that a second blow would follow, Bichet rolled away with a swift lurch to one side, shouting for help. His left side was red.

Messaoud faced about. Chaptel expected a blow from the *Turco*, or some attempt at restraint. But the corporal grinned, and buried his hands in his pockets.

"No finish?" he asked.

Calm now, Chaptel shook his head, and threw the knife aside. Lespart had told Messaoud that he had no control over his prisoner for the day, and he would not interfere. That was obedience.

Chaptel suddenly recalled having promised good behavior. What a manner to repay Lespart's trust! But it was too late now. Bichet was groaning with pain, staring in utter amazement.

"No finish? Then we go back now," Messaoud concluded.

The innkeeper had picked up the knife, wiped it clean, replaced it in the sheath. Then only he thought of Bichet.

"I go for *toubib!*" he declared, and waddled out of the café into the sunlit street.

Without another glance at Bichet, Chaptel followed Messaoud, and took the road back to camp.

THE sinking sun spilled its red glow on the wave crests. Flying fish lifted and darted like a swarm of gleaming arrows into the flank of the combers. In the sky sea-gulls twisted and spun, immensely free, intensely white. Nearly a month ago, Chaptel had left Algiers, bound for Cayenne or Saint Laurent du Maroni in French Guiana, the penal colony of the French Republic.

Looking out through the open port-hole, Chaptel was happy, happier than he had been in many months. Ahead—he thought he could already smell it—was the land, that land of abject misery, Guiana, which to him was the land of hope, the land from which men escaped.

Hold Number Five of the convict transport *Loire* was neither comfortable nor beautiful. But it was free from smells and vermin. The ship's doctor and the husky guards enforced discipline and cleanliness. Around this cage, in which more than a hundred half-naked men huddled, ran metal pipes, which would spout steam in case of rebellion. Little wonder that disturbance on the transport was unknown. No one wished to be boiled alive.

In the cage with Chaptel, the majority of the men were assassins and among the number, one or two celebrities. There was Hulot, chief of a band of *chauffeurs*—heaters—who had terrorized an entire section of France. They would invade an isolated farm, tie up the servants, and search for money. If they could not find it they would seize the master of the household, remove his sabots and socks, and toast his feet over a blaze. When Hulot and his gang were discovered and surrounded by gendarmes and half a company of infantry of the line summoned for help, they had put up a spectacular fight. Somehow, their courage had appealed to the population, and influenced by the general trend of sympathy, the President of the Republic had commuted their death sentences to life imprisonment.

Hulot, strong in the bloody prestige of his past performances, swaggered insolently, and accepted cigarets and candy from the cabin passengers, who were unhealthily curious and eager to touch the hand that had killed. On his left arm, Chaptel had seen the pip of spades, and had learned from him that he was a former private in the battalion and a former inmate of the military penitentiary.

There was also Bouciaux, a huge brute of a man, muscular, pugnacious, yet jovial and kind-hearted. He had killed a man and a woman. Passionate crime, the newspapers called it. Bouciaux was the victim of a too-sudden rise to fame. Five years ago he had been happy as a cooper, in the river port of Lyons, singing at his work, keeping time with the mallet. A visiting singer of considerable fame had heard him, been attracted by his voice. Three years later Bouciaux was barytone in grand opera, making more money in one evening than he had formerly made in a year. Simple and rough, he had become interested in a second-class prima donna, who to his unsophisticated eyes represented romance. Things went well for a while.

Then Bouciaux found that he had a rival. The lady in question doubtless expected an outburst of temperament, threats, perhaps a slap. Bouciaux, doggedly serious, was uncouth enough to strangle his rival, and remove the prima donna from further participation in opera or any other life. Had Bouciaux possessed a glib tongue and a handsome face, he would have been acquitted with a tearful apology from an admiring jury. But he expressed himself like a dock laborer. Net result—life, at hard labor.

Bouciaux was the light and color of the aggregation. He sang! In the stuffy hold, his voice may not have possessed the rich tones once poured forth in a theater, but his choice of ballads appealed to his particular audience. He had thrown out of his repertoire the stately operatic selections, and had gone back to popular compositions.

"*J'aimerais mieux croire au diable.*
Tirer sur sa queue inusable——"

"I'd sooner believe in the devil
And pull his everlasting tail."

The men were of this opinion. Satan was their patron. Bouciaux, naked to the waist, a thatch of hair spreading like a mat over his chest, boomed similar songs in the semi-darkness.

These men were not much different from the men Chaptel had known in the hills, save that the age average was higher. With his mere attempt at murder on the person of ex-Sergeant Bichet, Chaptel could not hope to take his place among the aristocracy of this circle. He was an obscure member, although esteemed by Hulot as a Knave of Spades.

Hulot was of medium height, and not powerfully built. But he was as quick as a panther. In action he was a strange mixture of feline and reptile. There was something cold-blooded, terrifying, in his ways.

How much of this was real, how much pretense, Chaptel could not say. But the fact remained, with the exception of Bouciaux, all the men feared him, even the massive, red-necked guard, whose blue cap appeared at regular intervals, accompanied by a jangle of steel.

This guard was in charge of all of the prisoners, and had several uniformed men under his orders. To Chaptel's surprize he was almost courteous in speech, and during the entire trip did not once use violence. A heavy service revolver bumped on his right hip, in a holster slung over the left shoulder. He was at once firm and gentle. When he had occasion to pass Chaptel, he softly urged him aside with open palm, instead of punching and kicking as the camp sergeants would have done.

Chaptel soon noticed that he avoided speaking to Hulot. When he was compelled to through the exigencies of his duty, he did so in an impersonal tone. The guard had his wife and a six-year-old son on board. The wife Chaptel never saw, although the youngster often came down for a few minutes, and stared at the convicts fearfully. Once Chaptel heard him speak to a sailor—

"One of those men is going to kill my papa."

"Nonsense! Why should they? Your papa watches them because it's his duty. Why should they want to kill him?"

The boy stamped his foot impatiently.

"My papa says that he knows one of them will kill him! He says that there are bad men there."

The sailor laughed.

"Get back on deck if you're frightened, kid."

Chaptel heard a low chuckle at his side. He turned to face a wrinkled old convict whose clipped hair showed white.

"The guard has the wind-up—he's lost his nerve," he said. "I knew him years ago, before that kid was born, and he was a hard nut then. Feared nothing. I guess getting married got his nerves frayed. He won't last long. Once they get scared, they either get killed or die in a few months from worry. I had been wondering why he was so polite. I served eight years under him, in a camp in the bush. Wood cutting."

"You've been in Guiana before then?"

"Nine years. Escaped five years ago, roamed all over. Finally I got homesick for the old village, and sneaked in. Some one saw me, recognized me and I was re-arrested at the dinner my sister had cooked to celebrate my home coming. But don't worry. I won't be here long. I know the ropes."

"How did you manage it?" Chaptel asked.

"Easy enough, when I succeeded. I had tried twice. Once by sea, trying to make a Brazilian sail-boat. The guards overhauled me and pulled me out just in time to save me from the sharks. The second time I tried to make it by land, intended to cross the Maroni into Dutch Guiana. I starved for two weeks, then gave myself up. For that, I pulled down thirty two months altogether, in the Isle of Silence."

"What's that?"

"One of the Salvation Islands, where the tough eggs get sent. There are three of them: Royale, Saint-Joseph and Devil's Island. On Royale, they put those who try to escape a first time, or those who commit murder while in Guiana. Saint-Joseph, which is called the Isle of Silence, is for the fellows who can't learn a lesson. On second offense, you're sent there. All the time you're there you're not allowed to talk, no one talks to you. If the keepers have anything to let you know, they use gestures or a written slip. You think it isn't hard? Most men go crazy under that system. I was two years learning to talk, after I left. You can't imagine what a man goes through day after day, without hearing a human voice. Once in a while some fellow breaks down and screams. Then he is punished and his term extended. It may be legal, but it's torture just the same. Worse than the old business of pouring melted lead into a man's eyes."

"You finally got away, though."

"It was this way. From the Isle of Silence, I was sent back to Cayenne on the mainland. But they had already more convicts than they could accommodate. I was scheduled to go back on to the island with fifteen others in a small schooner piloted by an old man named Pierre, who had been doing just that business for years. Two soldiers, niggers from Martinique, were to watch us. But the sixteen of us were desperate. All toughs. Without planning anything, we understood each other.

"One night, we jumped the niggers, got their guns away. We tied up old man Pierre and the four men in his crew. There was one of us who had been a sailor before, a quarter-master, and he sure knew all about sails. He turned right around and started for Brazil. In a few days we made Belem. We kept Pierre, his crew, and the niggers, below deck, while we sold the cargo for whatever it would bring. Then we scooted ashore.

"Pierre complained to the Brazilian authorities. But, I don't know why, Brazil don't put our kind out, won't give us up. In Belem, I bet you you could count five hundred men who have got away from Guiana. They call themselves "Brothers of the Coast," and live on what they can pick up, because they landed without money.

"We had money, from the sale of the cargo. We scattered. I saw the sailor once after that, three years after. He was in Chili. He had a coasting steamer all of his own and took drinks with the port officials! I was a —— fool and blew my money, and I got homesick. And here I am. I bet I get three years Silence. But after that, good-by! And next time, I won't go home."

"You'll chance it again."

"Yes, I have a little money hidden away, though not as much as I should have. If you have money, you can escape easy."

The conversation dropped.

And Chaptel was hopeful.

THE recalled now his last interview with his parents. They had come to Algiers to see him before his departure for South America. He had found his mother aged twenty years in appearance, a white, puffy face, with tearful eyes. Dressed in black, she seemed to be in mourning for him. His father, in black frock-coat, very solemn, had been almost as pathetic. He bit his mustache and large tears streaked his cheeks and nose, although he made his voice rough and encouraging.

Chaptel dully submitted to his mother's embraces, answered mechanically. Why had he struck Bichet? She wouldn't understand. How long had he to serve in Guiana? Eight years. After? Well, he might have to come back and serve a prison term in Algeria equal to his original condemnation while in the battalion. After? He would have to serve the balance of twenty months still due to the army. In total, about thirteen years.

She would be dead before that? Nonsense, he declared. Many women live to be sixty. But she could not be consoled, and begged the helpless guard to do something to shorten her son's stay in penal institutions. Before the time of the visit was up, she fainted. The guard rushed out for water.

"I hope you've had your lesson," said Chaptel Senior. "Look here, I have a few thousand francs left. If they can ever help you—let me know. Sacred Thunder! I wish you could have employed them in a different way—but life is life——"

"Listen, father," Chaptel had said. "I don't intend to stay in Guiana. I'll escape. I'll go to some foreign country. You and mother can join me there."

His father had nodded in agreement, blown his nose vigorously. More heartrending minutes, and Chaptel was at last alone. He had wished that they had refrained from this last visit. The sight of his mother discouraged him, made him regret that he had not taken the braver course. Would not his mother have prefered him dead than think of him suffering in a strange land?

The injustice of fate made him want to scream, to shout his denunciation of the order of things. In punishing him, two innocent people were punished, two hardworking, honest persons. But Bouciaux's family, Hulot's, the relatives of the old man who had escaped, all suffered. Life was life, and a bitter life.

He thought of Lespart. White-faced, Lespart had reproached him with his lack of honor, and had declared himself through, not only with Chaptel, but with all punishment camps. The lieutenant had not spared cutting words. He said he fully realized why men in charge of camps became like Bichet. A few examples of ingratitude and one never felt like trusting any man again. Chaptel knew that all his later troubles had arisen from his defense of Lespart, but his lips were sealed.

He was aroused from his gloomy thoughts by Hulot, who came to his side.

"Blue?" he asked.

"Yes. I keep rolling things over and over in my head, and I feel as I was going to burst in two. I have eight years to serve out there."

"Eight years? Sixteen, you mean."

"I was condemned to eight years, that's all."

"You poor fool," grunted Hulot. "Didn't you ever hear about the *doublage?* Men condemned to hard labor are supposed to serve a length of time equal to that of their sentence, as free men, colonists, to build up the colony. If you serve five years hard labor, when you get through you can't leave Guiana for another five years. Eight—you stay eight years. Eight and eight are sixteen."

"You're kidding me."

"No. My lawyer—I had a good lawyer—" Hulot gave a world famous name—"told me so. It's called the law of May 30th, 1854. The *double* system was used by the English to colonize Australia. They succeeded, because the climate was good. This republic imitates them, but Guiana isn't Australia. The *double* is the hardest part. The government stops feeding you and you have to hunt your own grub. Thank God, I drew a life sentence. With me, it means either escape, or assured living."

Chaptel dug his nails into his palms.

"I won't stand for it, I won't!"

"——!" swore Hulot. "It might be worse. Suppose you had nine years instead of eight?"

Shakily, Chaptel sought the veteran from Guiana. He hoped that Hulot was not serious. But it was a vain hope. Then something seemed to break within him. He sank into a heap in a corner, sobbing. The others stared at him, puzzled. After a while, Chaptel got up, glaring into space.

"I'm going," he said.

"He's off his head!" Bouciaux announced.

Headlong, Chaptel made for the iron door, pushing men out of his way roughly. They glanced at his face and feared to bar his progress. He grasped the iron bars and screamed:

"Let me out! Let me out!"

No one answered. He battered his hands against the steel. His fingers were cut and bleeding. He fought against that inert metal, his frenzy growing. Sixteen years! His cries attracted attention.

The head guard appeared, hand on his revolver.

"Stop that racket, will you? People will think I'm murdering you down there."

"I want to get out—I want to get out!" Chaptel pleaded.

"You can't," the guard replied. Then he added. "Tonight I'll let you get on deck, if you want some air. But stop shouting!"

"Out! Out! I want to go home."

The head guard summoned his assistants. They opened the door and halted Chaptel's savage rush. They were seven against one, yet the prisoner bore them to and fro for several seconds, before they could bring him down and lace him into a straight jacket.

"It's begun," said the head guard, knowing that one such outburst would precipitate others.

He was right. For several hours, the men were screaming and fighting. The sight of the hysterical Chaptel had snapped the overtaut nerves.

At last, worn out, the guards were able to rest.

"I wonder what started that first man?" the chief asked.

Hulot laughed.

"I told him about the *doublage*," he said.

One of the guards, a resolute young man, under thirty, faced the notorious criminal.

"He isn't as hard as you are, Hulot. It's enough to make any man go crazy to mix with your kind."

"There's one thing worse than an assassin," Hulot said, "and that's a man who's too lazy to work and too cowardly to steal, and makes his money watching us."

Diplomatically, the head guard ended the controversy.

"We're all men. We make our mistakes. You boys be quiet and I'll give you wine."

CHAPTEL'S rebellion was of short duration. The head guard accepted his promise and released him. Exhausted from his outburst, he slept like a beast that night.

When he awoke, the *Loire* was rolling deep, and the engines had stopped. He went to the port-hole and glanced out at the land which might be his home for sixteen years, or if events took the usual trend, his grave. He could not see much, long lines of palm trees rising from the shores of little inlets, jagged, black rocks emerging from the blue water. He was reminded of storybook descriptions of deserted islands. That was his sole impression.

The veteran convict was at his elbow.

"Saint-Laurent?" Chaptel asked.

"No, Cayenne. I hear there's yellow fever in Saint-Laurent. We'll be landed here."

"Why don't we pull into port?"

"The mud's too thick in the harbor. We'll be taken ashore in small boats. See—" he indicated a fleet of boats rounding a point of land—"there they come."

French Guiana has at call ten to fifteen thousand pairs of arms, those arms belonging to men who, so the law states, are to be employed at the hardest forms of labor. Yet, Guiana possesses but a few miles of road, only seventeen miles of rail and lacks even a passable harbor, while the grass grows tall in the main streets of the town. The convicts work, of course, but not at anything useful. They sweat and die in the bush, cutting wood. Those who manage to live cut more wood. And that's all.

"Nice place!" Chaptel pronounced.

"The cess-pool of France," replied the other, who knew.

The boats were bumping against the sides of the *Loire*, each manned by six convicts and a guard, with the inevitable revolver slung in a black leather holster from the shoulder. Chaptel noticed that these guards wore medals. Everywhere that he had gone he had found that keepers wore medals.

He glanced with interest at the convicts, his future comrades. Torsos bare, feet bare, legs clad in tattered trousers, faces shaded by immense straw hats, they seemed little like Europeans, rather members of some primitive white race. Tattoo marks strengthened this impression, until one was able to decipher the inscriptions. Many of the boatmen had words on their faces that would prevent them from moving about in a civilized community.

Among the half score men within his range of vision, Chaptel made out three Knaves of Spades. He wondered why the men in charge never thought of associating the mark so often met with as that of a secret organization. And yet the pip of spades, hidden in the crook of the left arm was not easily seen, dwarfed in importance by the larger, more striking drawings adorning chests, biceps and backs.

"Eh, Rat's Tail!" called the veteran: "Back again!" He thrust his wrinkled face out of the port-hole. "How have you been?"

"Still alive," the other replied. "So you got caught, did you?"

"No," replied the old man with deep sarcasm, "I came back for a visit!" Then he mentioned several names. "How are they?"

Four were dead. Two from sickness. One shot trying to escape. The fourth guillotined. Two were serving time on the Isle of Silence. Five were cutting wood up bush. One had escaped—one out of twelve.

The head-guard, he who feared the prisoners, came down, unlocked the iron grill.

"Take your bundles. Pass before me one by one. Go up on deck."

He had his hand on the butt of his revolver and bit his mustache savagely. Hulot swung his pack on his shoulders and led the way. Bouciaux was next. Chaptel had to wait his turn. In this, as in all things, a fashion of hierarchy had been instituted among the prisoners.

Chaptel hoisted himself up the companionway, ever under the watchful eyes of the guards, strung out at strategical positions. He stumbled upon the deck, which felt very hot to his sandaled feet. Although the sun was not as brilliant as in Algeria, the heat was more intense. Chaptel was undergoing the first "feel" of the tropics. He descended the ship's ladder into an open boat, took his seat in the stern. Without realizing, he leaned against the knee of the guard, and received a hearty kick in the small of his back as a warning. The craft gradually filled up. Neither Hulot nor the old man were with Chaptel. And he felt very alone.

"*Nage!*" called the guard, when the boat was full.

The men at the oars pushed away from the *Loire*, swung their blades outboard, and leaned back.

"A little pep!" barked the guard. Rythmically, the backs bent and straightened, bent and straightened. The boat gathered speed.

Then came a sharp report.

"The first one!" said one of the oarsmen, with a laugh.

A prisoner, unwilling to land in Guiana, had dived overboard and been shot. Evidently the guards were instructed to prevent even attempt at escape, and were held responsible for the deaths, for the guard near Chaptel spoke up:

"Won't be any shooting here. First guy to make a move gets knocked on the head and then goes to Saint-Joseph for a spell."

Few would risk the Isle of Silence.

The boat rounded the last tongue of palm-fringed land, and Cayenne was in sight. Nothing extraordinary.

A huddle of gray and yellow houses,

topped by the slender shaft of a steeple—worship exists even in Guiana—and the crest of palm trees. Palm trees, which Chaptel had ever associated with a life of romance and ease, and which now dominated his gloomy existence.

They landed, and formed in fours like troops, swung through the grass-grown streets of Cayenne toward the penitentiary structures, located some distance away from the town. The intervals between buildings were spacious, the aggregation well laid out, and with a little effort could have been made charming. But effort is hard to supply in the humid heat.

Chaptel was struck by the number of breeds, ranging from dusky mulattoes to almost white octoroons. These had no curiosity concerning the newcomers. Convicts were a familiar sight. Even the children shouted their derision perfunctorily.

At the barracks the new arrivals were given food and drink, and then were assigned to their quarters. Against the recent recruits, precautions were taken. The guards had learned, long ago, that the first night in Guiana was the most to be feared. The men still retained a degree of courage and determination, had not yet sunk into tropical apathy. Later, the watch over those who had proved to be "good subjects" would be relaxed. But this first night every one must be ironed.

So Chaptel lay down on the sloping plank that served as bed, his ankles locked within circles of steel.

THE dull thud of machetes and axes resounded. The flies buzzed and swarmed on perspiring backs. A group of sunburned skeletons, skin and bones, bent and rose, the majority completely naked. A few, from habit rather than decency, still showed a pair of ragged trousers. The guard alone was completely dressed, too completely for the taste of the prisoners; he carried carbine and revolver.

The convicts of the French Republic were cutting brush from the path of the road that was to link Cayenne and Saint-Laurent du Maroni. The road was planned in the time of Napoleon III. Now, two fifths of a century later, it had progressed fifteen miles. The famed weaving of Penelope was a swiftly completed task compared with that road.

For eighteen months, Chaptel had been in Guiana. Fourteen of these he had spent on the road. The camp in the hills of Algeria had not been a rest cure. The Guiana road was a hundred times worse. Nothing much to eat. Bad water—who cares about the sanitary conditions of a convict's water? The South American tropics are a well-known fever hole. So the convicts had fever. More than half were constantly shaking. The guard himself had fever occasionally. A sick guard develops a grouch. A man with a high temperature is quick with a revolver, or a carbine or a club.

Chaptel had been beaten. He had been shot in the leg once. The guard, sick or drunk, had seen him stray several feet out of the way and suspected him, or pretended to suspect him, of trying to escape, and had discharged his pistol into his thigh. A dirty handkerchief on the wound and Chaptel had gone on working.

He was younger than the others, perhaps of stronger constitution. He had resisted fever, save for one or two attacks, not considered sufficiently severe to permit him to stop work. Neither was he the prey of other common diseases. His stomach was sound. His belly did not droop from his body in that oval shaped sack nicknamed by the French "colonial egg," which is caused by minute worms swarming in a man's bowels. Physically, although gaunt and weary, he was sound. Mentally, he was but half a man. The rest was brute, a brute that grunted at the sight of food, drooled at the sight of water and raved at the chance of a drink of strong liquor.

When he thought of the camp in Algeria, he was overcome with loneliness. Of his previous life, he had very little recollection. It seemed to him that he had always been in prison. At first he had availed himself of his membership in the Knaves of Spades. But the great hold of the Knaves had been the fear of death.

Here, on the road, that fear did not exist. A knife thrust was considered a mercy. Very often, men took matters in their own hands, and were found hanged. One had even choked himself with his fingers, a monstrous evidence of a desire for death that stilled the last vestige of self-preservation. Several had tried to force the guard to give them a pass to a better world, by bolting for the bush. But the guard wounded them in the legs. Guiana was one land where sparing a man's life was not considered a mercy.

Chaptel often laughed loudly, at night, in the bamboo hut. That was when he recalled the time he had desired to come to Cayenne. But many men laughed as he did for one reason or another, so no one paid attention. Sometimes a wind of revolt would blow over the huts; the death of a guard, then a try at escape in a body. But it fell through, always. These men had not been able to agree with the world. No more could they agree with each other.

Hulot was dead. In an attempt to escape from the bush settlement where he was detained, he had killed a guard, the head guard of the *Loire*, he who had foreseen his end at the hand of a convict. Hulot had been tried and condemned to the guillotine. Chaptel had heard the gruesome story of that execution. The executioner was a convict, and half-mad. He took excessive pride in his bloody calling. Often, in the last struggle before the heavy blade falls, the victim pulls his head out of position, and the edge strikes the base of the skull, thereby causing what the executioner termed a "messy job," and moreover, nicking the blade. To forestall this, the Guiana executioner had invented a simple device. He attached a pound of lead to the guillotine, which would drop upon the skull a fifth of a second before the blade was released. Stunned, the man relaxed, and the edge found no other obstacle than the spinal column.

Hulot, more vigorous than others, had twisted himself half around from the sloping plank. The lead weight had stunned him in that position, and the blade in its course, had severed his head obliquely, cutting off part of the chin. Ashamed of himself for what he called his dishonor, the executioner had taken the hundred francs paid him for each execution, and had kept drunk for two weeks.

Bouciaux had a more glorious finish.

His southern imagination had overcome the apathy of the climate and he had tried a first escape. For days, he had roamed the bush, on the banks of the Maroni River, trying to obtain ferriage across to Dutch Guiana. But he had no money. Neither negroes, Indians, nor liberated convicts were willing to help him out free of charge. Caught, he had been sent to the Isle of Silence. Bouciaux, the songbird, and silence, that could not exist. He sang, as he had always sung. He was punished, saw his term lengthen to thousands of days in a lonely cell, without light. He decided to get out, if only to go to the guillotine, and dislocated a guard's shoulder. The guard and two of his kind had beaten him into insensibility. Beaten him so severely that he was taken to the hospital. Three days after, a coffin was missing, one of the few on the Island: For there a coffin can be used an unlimited number of times. The coffin is opened on one side, the corpse deposited, and then taken a few hundred feet from the shore, and dumped into the sea. The sharks do the rest.

So, Bouciaux had stolen a coffin, and in this crude and sinister craft, had struck out for another shore. A launch sent after him had soon overhauled him. The singer stood up, waved a mocking farewell, and leaped into the water. The sharks, perhaps because they were not accustomed to see their human food in action, had spared him long. And Bouciaux had evaded the launch, in which men were making frantic efforts to save him for the living death of the cell. At last a shark had done his duty, and Bouciaux and his voice were gone forever.

Chaptel wondered, when his brain could wonder at anything but his immense misery, how many of the men who had come with him on the *Loire* would ever see France again. To think himself one of the exceptions was not sane. Yet, where there is no sane hope, a man will cling to a mad hope.

In vain, Chaptel had tried to obtain assignment as a house servant to some white man either in Cayenne or Saint-Laurent. There were fortunate convicts who served their period of punishment in this manner. He had written to the governor, to the inspector of the penitentiary, groveling, pleading letters. But here again, he found that he lacked distinction. He was not an assassin, not even a murderer. He was nobody, save a number in the thirty thousands, 33,456, to be accurate. There is a coquetry among employers of convict servants in Guiana. They like to say to their invited guests:

"My servant is so-and-so, of the famous murder case. Look how docile he is with me!"

So he was cutting shrubs, while the man who had poisoned his wife and children went forth to a more alluring life. One was rolling pills in the hospital. Another distinguished prisoner was teaching school. A third was serving his term *de luxe*, as butler in a house in town. He had friends in the legislative chambers, who saw to it that he was not harshly dealt with. Liberty, equality, fraternity! Vain words in Guiana—as elsewhere.

"Eh, there, Calf's Head!" shouted the guard. "Do you want me to wake you up?"

Magre, the guard, who did not lack a sense of humor, had branded his charges with nicknames. It is doubtful if his humor would have lasted had he known that the prisoners called him "Black Monkey."

Chaptel straightened wearily, lifted his ax. The roots in the ground were thick and strong, and it took many blows to slice them into fragments. And Chaptel often cut his feet. That did not matter greatly; his feet were not things of beauty. The "jiggers" had bored under his toe nails. He had scratched his soles on spines. The sores had festered, and not treated carefully, lasted long. Walking was much like stepping on a pin cushion with the points wrong side out. Part of the day, and all the night, the mosquitoes were busy. There were venomous spiders in the bush. Also small snakes with nasty bites. The guard, who wore boots, stayed in the open, and ordered his men to go ahead.

"Calf's Head, do you absolutely wish me to help you with my foot in a place where it will do the most good!"

"No, Chief."

"Work harder, then."

THE ax rose and fell. Eighteen months. A strong man could last three years, some lasted five. But never eight. And if he served his eight years hard labor, he would have to remain eight more, earning his living as best he could, one man among the thousands waiting for the half dozen jobs available. No wonder the man serving *doublage*, tired of being hungry, committed another crime to get back into hard labor where at least a small amount of food was assured.

The day progressed, the sun grew hotter.

The rainy season in Guiana is long, six to eight months. And during the rest of the year there are occasional storms. The ground is always sodden. Hence the steam-like air and the mosquitoes. Blazing sun on swampy soil part of the day. Then drizzling rain, pouring rain, flooding rain. One day follows the preceding, to give place to another. No let up, no rest. The guards go to France on leave, every two or three years. They are given a rest in town, every few weeks. The convicts live on and on without change. Live and then die, die on a day like all the others.

"Enough for today," suddenly pronounced Magre, who was finding it too hot even though he did not have to labor.

He herded the men back into the huts.

Chaptel lay down, like the others. The hut smelled. There were mosquitoes vibrating in the convenient obscurity. But there was no work. It has been said that the relief from pain is happiness. Chaptel was not tortured as much in the hut as in the bush, so it might be said that he was happy.

All about, the fever-stricken men chattered their teeth, like rattles. Some were past the first stage, and delirious. They were allowed to howl as they pleased, to do what their demented minds willed them as long as they did not threaten violence. Being sick, they were entitled to quinin. But the guard was sensitive to bad odors and loathsome sights, and did not bother with the formality which would bring him into the hut. One got well without quinin, or one did not. It was all the same to him.

Two men had found the courage to converse.

"What did you do to come here?"

Then followed a lengthy tale of blood. How much was real, how much was imagination, no one could say. The speaker himself probably did not know.

Chaptel laughed. The others thought he had fever. What had he done to come here? Been a fool, a young fool, that was all. Listened to older men talk, then imitated them. After? He had been slightly drunk, and got mixed up with a bad affair through a man named Duval. After? He had risked his life to save a man who had befriended him. And then? To save his own life, he had wounded, lightly, a man who deserved death. That was all.

Time after time, he had resumed his brief story. Unbalanced or not, he believed that he had not done enough to deserve what he was undergoing. Those others, perhaps, who had killed, looted, deserved a hundredth part of what they endured. And even their victims would have forgiven them if they could have seen the punishment.

The main idea was to prevent reoccurrence of the crime. So the laws said. But the world was hypocritical, and in reality took revenge, enjoyed the tortures it inflicted on the misfits, the half lunatics, those who rebelled against ordained custom and took the law into their own hands. A man stole a million; he was lightly punished, or acquitted with a near apology. Another stole a few francs; he was imprisoned in hell. Why? Because one was educated, or intelligent enough to do the thing bloodlessly, while the other was primitive, and reacted with less hypocrisy to his desire for gain.

Crime was eternal. Such crimes as his, Chaptel's, would never end. Because a man would always be foolish when young, always be loyal to friends, false though they might prove, and would always fear death.

The man next to him begged for tobacco. Chaptel had never learned to refuse. He fumbled beneath the rags which served as a blanket, and found a package of cigarets.

"Here," he said. "Have you a match? No—just a minute."

He produced a bottle, half filled with matches. Against the rules to smoke in the huts. Or to have matches. But every man was willing to risk a beating from the guard for the sake of tobacco.

Chaptel scratched the match, then, tempted by the first whiff of smoke, lighted a cigaret for himself.

"I just arrived this afternoon, and have no pal here. Didn't expect you'd give me anything, but tried it just the same." Then he looked closer. "Weren't you a friend of Hulot's?"

"Yes."

"I place you now. You're the kid that threw the fit when he learned about the *doublage*. What do you think of that! I was the guy that told you about my *escapes*."

"The old man!"

"The old man."

Inarticulately, Chaptel groped out for his hand. He thought he saw a ray of light. The old man—who knew about the ways of escape—who had told him that if one had money one could escape.

"They only gave me a year and a half in the Isle of Silence," the other went on, "Because they said I hadn't done anything bad while I was out. It pays to be good, don't it? What's your name?"

"Calf's Head," Chaptel said mechanically

"I mean your real name. I couldn't call a fellow who gave me a smoke 'Calf's Head'!"

"Chaptel."

"Chaptel—Chaptel——"

"I thought you'd be out before now."

"I had no chance."

"You could fix Magre up—he's out for the cash."

"Magre. You sure?"

"Just lately I heard about him," the old man went on. "There's a fellow in America now who got away through him, and many others that I don't know about."

"He'll get me out of here for money?"

"Surest thing you know. He's square that way, he is. He fixes it up so that no one will go after you for a while."

Chaptel, at first wildly hopeful, grew despondent.

"But I can't get much money. My old man has it, in France. He told me I could have—all I wanted—but the authorities don't let much money through at a time."

"Don't fret. Magre will attend to it. I think he has a pal in France who collects in advance."

"And it's almost a sure thing?"

"If you have two thousand francs, sonny, you may be smoking a cigar in Buenos Aires inside of three or four months. You can get away from here, I know that, through Magre. The rest won't be so easy. But it won't be any harder than here."

Again Chaptel reached out and grasped the old man's hand.

"Thanks," he whispered.

"You gave me tobacco. So I put you on. One favor claims a return," the old man said

FEAR of Magre vanished with the knowledge that he could be bribed. But he must use caution in approaching him, else less fortunate members of the convict group might overhear and report Magre to the inspector. Private conversation with the guard in the ordinary course of work was impossible. Magre never came close to the men, no nearer than was absolutely necessary for a kick. Not only were his sensitive nostrils offended by the odor of unwashed humanity, but the convicts were armed with sharp weapons, and there were among them a fair proportion who would not hesitate to bury an ax between the uniformed man's shoulder blades.

The first thing to accomplish, therefore, was a chance to speak a few words to the guard. And so on the next afternoon, Chaptel misdirected an ax blow, and opened a neat gash across his right ankle. The blood flowed. To sink to the ground groaning in pain was the next move.

Magre loosened his revolver from the holster, waved the other men away from Chaptel, and drew near.

"Another cut, Calf's Head. Your mother should have married a wood-cutter. He'd have taught you to use an ax!"

"It hurts—" moaned Chaptel. "It hurts!' Then swiftly, in a lower voice—

"Chief, you're interested in money, aren't you?"

Magre's expression did not change. He brought up a tender hand to smooth his mustache.

"You're not hurt bad enough to quit work. Come around to my tent for iodin tonight."

Magre had understood. For it was not the guard's habit to show solicitude for a minor injury.

Chaptel begged a rag from a comrade, chewed a few leaves into a pulp, which he applied to the cut. A tight bandage, and the bleeding stopped. A cheap price to pay for a private interview that might mean liberty!

After bolting his scanty ration of boiled meat, Chaptel went to the guard's hut.

Magre was in his shirt sleeves, feet in slippers. From the waist band on his trousers, the butt of a service revolver jutted. Chaptell pushed the door shut with his heel, and stood at attention.

"There's iodin on the table. Fix your ankle," suggested Magre.

Chaptel opened the bottle and washed the cut with the burning liquid. He wrapped the wound in gauze, supplied by the guard.

"You spoke about money," Magre began. "You want a favor. Is it a transfer to a soft snap in Cayenne or Saint-Laurent, or the *big thing?*"

"The big thing."

"How much are you willing to pay?"

"Five hundred francs."

"Nonsense," grunted Magre. "That's less than it costs me. I won't do this thing at a loss."

"What's the usual price?"

"I risk my position as guard. I risk having to join you boys! Four thousand francs is the very least."

"All right. Four thousand francs."

"Before we go any further I want to know a thing or two. Are you resolute? Can you stand hardships, the worst hardships a man can endure?"

"I can—you know that."

"Escape is not a bed of roses," Magre explained. "Particularly my way. If it was only a question of getting you across the Maroni into Dutch Guiana, that would be different. But the Dutchmen are treacherous. Sometimes, when they need labor, they accept all the escaped men from here. When business slacks, they send them back. I can't afford to have any of my men sent back. My way is sure. No one of the fellows I helped was ever recaptured. Here's a list." He drew a paper from the table drawer before him. "Here are the men who escaped from this place. I swear to you that not one of the names marked 'recaptured' or 'shot' paid me a cent. They all tried it on their own. Now you sit down here and write a note to whoever has the money. Mark the address plainly. Put in enough personal details to assure the receiver of your identity: How many of your father's teeth are missing, the brand of tobacco he prefers, what you did the day before your tenth birthday. Understand?"

"Yes, chief."

"I have an associate in France who collects. He'll send me a letter when it's done. Then—I'll see that you make your break. By the way, you may have a friend who can fork over the right amount. Take him with you. It don't cost much more for me to get two out than one. Clear profit."

"I know some one."

"Fine. From this week on I'm going to make you a trusted man. You'll take tools to be mended to Saint-Laurent, you'll bear letters and so on. That means that you'll be gone, days at a time, four, five, as long as a week. People around here will get used to your absences. So, when you really go, I won't have to report you for several days. I can always say I had sent you on an errand."

Days and days without being watched.

But Magre was something of a mind reader.

"Better not try and escape on your own, my boy. The niggers between here and Saint-Laurent are all out to collect reward for bringing in escaped convicts. You have no money to pay a canoe to take you across the Maroni, at least I don't think you have. You don't want to give up the substance for the shadow. In three months the answer will be here. Then you can go with an even chance."

"What guarantee have I that you'll carry out your bargain once the money's in your hands?"

"The guys wanting to escape know my name, and in some way learn the result of my help. You *heard*, did you not? If I once fail, good-by money. And I want money. It's not on the salary I get here and the petty graft on the eats, that I'll make my pile. This escape game brings me sometimes as high as thirty thousand francs a year. I can't run the chance of losing out on that."

"That's right," Chaptel was compelled to admit.

"Now get out, or the night guard will be here after you."

Chaptel, his hand on the door handle, asked a last question—

"If my father refuses, or can't supply the money, what then?"

"Then?" Magre shrugged. "Did any one ask you to bribe me? No. You started things yourself. If the money is not forthcoming, well, I'll say you tried to escape."

Magre touched the butt of his revolver suggestively.

Chaptel paled. His father, although he had mentioned the few thousands, might fall short of the amount. His credit in town might not be very good with a son in Guiana.

"Some disappointed fellow might squeal," Magre explained. "That's why I can't afford to take the chance. Now get out. And good luck!"

WITH hope, Chaptel became more cheerful. And his new work, that of messenger, was not as tedious and back-breaking as the road. He and Lavaud, the old man, had also managed a private interview with Magre, walked together along the grass-grown trails. Convicts having this comparative liberty were not rare, and they attracted no attention. In Saint-Laurent, out of the small amount of money each received from home, were purchased strong shoes and clothing. The shirt must bear a number stitched across the breast.

Magre, for appearance sake, kicked Chaptel perfunctorily when he came within range of his boot, in public. But they were already privileged characters. Lavaud, the more experienced, warned Chaptel against appearing too happy. Happiness was not normal, and would cause suspicion.

Months passed.

Then one day, when they were on the way to Saint-Laurent, a stranger suddenly stood before them, framed by thick bushes.

He was a large, sunburned fellow, with a good-looking face, and splendid teeth which he was manifestly glad to show in a smile. He was dressed in stout brown clothing, wore tall laced boots, and carried a sporting rifle in the crook of his elbow. At first glance, Chaptel believed him to be white, then the liquid brilliancy of his eyes, his teeth, something in his voice, revealed the negro strain. When he removed his large straw hat, in a mockingly elaborate salutation, Chaptel saw that his skull was covered with wool, a graying wool.

"*Messieurs* Chaptel and Lavaud?"

"Yes," replied Chaptel, bewildered by the unfamiliar appellation and his family name.

"I represent Chief Magre. Everything is settled, and you're to follow me."

"Follow you? Where?"

"You'll learn in proper time."

"You mean—escape?"

"No less."

A quarteroon, Chaptel decided, one of the self-styled Cayenne "Creoles." He spoke good French, save for an occasional lapse into the mulatto patois spoken on the coast.

Chaptel and Lavaud were too astonished to move, but stared, mouths agape at this man who was to lead them into liberty.

"My name is Yo-Yo," the native declared. "Behind me, in the bush, you'll find a bundle with clothes. There's a double-barreled shotgun for one of you. Quinin in case of fever. Also a small ax and two knives."

Chaptel was the first to make for the thicket. There he found the bundle. They found laced boots to fit their feet, and brown clothing. Chaptel took the gun and slung two bags of cartridges across his shoulders. Lavaud contented himself with the other supplies which included various articles of culinary aspect.

"Ready, Yo-Yo!" announced Chaptel, ringingly.

"Fine. Let's get off this *picada*—trail—into a less public road. From today on, we want no one to see us. Follow me."

They swung in after him, left the road, and were soon lost in the bushes. Yo-Yo moved without sound. He was an expert bushman, that could easily be perceived. But he did not seem talkative. In fact, offered no further remark that day. At dusk they entered even thicker growth, where immensely tall trees lifted above the bushes. Monkeys barked in the distance.

"*Matto bravo!*" said the guide loconically.

"I know as much as I did before!" Chaptel said with a laugh.

Gun in hand, in decent clothing, and at the end of his imprisonment, he had recovered his gaiety with astonishing speed.

"Bad wood," explained Yo-Yo. "But for you, good wood."

He marched ahead steadily until darkness fell, then found a clear spot, not too damp, and spread two blankets, which he carried slung army fashion around his torso. He produced a bulky parcel.

"Dried meat," he said. "All for tonight. We can't shoot or light a fire so near traveled roads. There's water in the tin bottle. Try to sleep as quick as you can."

And the first day of liberty drew to a close.

Yo-Yo was up with the sun, and went on at the same tireless gait. He never asked whether the two found it difficult to keep up: This was not his first experience with escaping men evidently, and he was aware that no pace was too swift. The hours succeeded each other, surprizingly devoid of incident. For two days the trio existed on dried meat and water. Then Yo-Yo shot monkeys and small animals which he called *pecas*, a sort of rodent not unlike the hare. He lighted small fires and roasted the meat. When Chaptel or Lavaud tried to engage him in conversation, he yawned and pretended to sleep.

After nine or ten days, Chaptel asked a definite question.

"Are we nearly out?"

"No."

"How much longer will it take us?"

"Three months—maybe four."

Chaptel gasped.

"But it will be worth it," Yo-Yo concluded, and smiled and said nothing more.

The next important remark was made more than a week later. Chaptel noticed that when the choice lay between two roads, one hard and well defined, the other boggy and overgrown, Yo-Yo invariably chose the latter. He questioned him for his reason.

"This is the dry season," said Yo-Yo. "If we keep to the dry roads we won't find many animals. No animals, no food. It's not knowing that gets fellows like you into trouble when you go out without a guide. I've seen escaping men starving, while I lived on the fat of the land."

Chaptel injected a subtle flattery in his voice.

"I suppose you could go out with almost no equipment and make your way in comfort. You seem to know these roads as Peter knows Heaven!"

Yo-Yo showed his teeth in a swift smile.

"Twenty-seven years I've roamed around here."

"Just doing this, taking convicts out? It's a hard way to make a living, I should think."

"You've got no reason to complain. There's gold ahead."

"Gold!" Lavaud exclaimed.

And Chaptel could not repress a thrill of excitement.

"Yes. I have found it, too. But it is in small amounts, in the river banks. I don't care for that. The soil here is much the same as California and Australia, where gold is found. There's a rich strike to be made somewhere, and I keep on looking. But I need money for equipment, and to live when I'm in Cayenne. I suggested this scheme to Magre, and we've been running it for seven years. He doesn't pay me much; fifteen hundred francs for this trip. But I can get along on it well enough. After I've got you out, I'll retrace my steps and examine closer all the places that have looked likely to me on the way. You've seen me fool about with a pan, haven't you?"

"Yes."

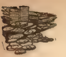
"I was sifting for gold." Yo-Yo hesitated. "I don't know why I tell you all this. It's none of your business."

Lavaud signaled for Chaptel to lag behind, and when Yo-Yo was at a safe distance, pointed out:

"He thinks we'll watch him and do him up if he makes a strike. You better talk to him and say we won't. You've got a good tongue and can put him off his guard. Then, if he finds it, well if the two of us had plenty of gold, we'd be safe, even if we walked back into Cayenne, cigars in our beaks!"

"Will you shut up, you dirty old murderer!" Chaptel invited.

Lavaud laughed quietly to himself.



FROM then on, Yo-Yo dropped his attitude of suspicion toward Chaptel, and talked freely.

One day, unexpectedly, he asked to see Chaptel's hand. After looking a long time at the palm, he came to a conclusion.

"You're not bad," he said.

Lavaud was forcibly out of this newly established intimacy, and resented it, although he tried to hide his feelings.

"I don't like that portion of a nigger," he said.

"Forget it!" Chaptel advised. "You're getting out, aren't you? If you're going to get fussy about your associates at this time——"

"He's an outsider. We two are *bagnards*—convicts—and he isn't."

"He'd soon be if he was caught helping us, if that's any consolation."

"He's doing it for money, not because he likes us."

"What did you kill for, before being sent here? Love?"

"No. But——"

Chaptel soon tired of the endless, senile arguments and joined Yo-Yo. The guide would point out matters of interest in the woods, reveal what he knew of bush-lore. Once they were startled by the appearance of a jaguar. Yo-Yo picked up a dead branch and threw it at the big cat, which vanished in a spotted streak across the path.

Shaking, Chaptel wiped his face with a sleeve.

"Narrow escape," he breathed.

As for Lavaud, his power of speech was gone, and he gazed at Yo-Yo with intense admiration.

"Narrow escape," Yo-Yo grunted. "That's what that tiger thinks. He was so scared you could have gone up and pulled his tail. As long as he wasn't wounded, he wouldn't lift a claw against a man. There's nothing dangerous to man in the woods, except insects."

"And snakes," said Chaptel.

"They'll go, if you give them a chance. The worse things are the *pecaris*, and there's always a tree handy. With a good rifle a man has nothing to fear."

Although it was important to save ammunition, Yo-Yo sacrificed a number of the precious cartridges to exhibit his prowess as a marksman. Then he taught Chaptel how to make a fire with dry sticks, how to cook a piece of meat in the open. The trip assumed the aspect of a personally conducted hunting expedition. Whole days were wasted while he learned to stalk a tapir. Yo-Yo and he made new soles for the worn-out boots with raw hides, made hats out of palm leaves.

Old man Lavaud persisted in considering himself and Chaptel bound together against Yo-Yo. He darkly hinted that the quarteroon would not forever be the center of the picture, and he, Lavaud, would take his place as leader, for he was the most ancient. His jealousy reminded Chaptel, in a maudlin way, of Duval's jealousy of Lespart. But he had made a resolution that he was through considering the opinion of his fellow convict. Should matters reach a climax and he be forced to choose between one of the two, he would side with Yo-Yo.

On second thought, Lavaud's pretension was ridiculous. No more than Chaptel did he know, even within hundreds of miles, where they were. Chaptel was not always certain of general directions, such as north and south. The trails taken by Yo-Yo meandered in bewildering fashion. They might be as near Brazil as Dutch Guiana. And they were completely at Yo-Yo's mercy.

If the guide suddenly decided never to return from one of the numerous hunting trips he took by himself to procure food when game was scarce in the immediate vicinity, Lavaud and Chaptel would die in the forest. They could of course find a stream, follow it to another, and so on until they reached the coast. But they might be unfortunate enough to return to the starting point, and be imprisoned on the Isle of Silence, with everything to be done over again. Yo-Yo had also dropped several remarks concerning the presence of *Nikey Epidians*, Indians who ate human flesh. Once they had seen smoke rising from a clearing, and the guide had circled the spot with great caution.

Yo-Yo was aware of Lavaud's antagonism. Forced to face him at meal time, he was compelled to take a definite attitude, and picked that of amused tolerance. The old man was querulous, and although he should have been disciplined by the years of solitary confinement, he spoke his mind freely on all subjects. He called Yo-Yo a coalsack and other names referring to his ancestry and legitimacy. Chaptel was often tempted to halt him, fearful that Yo-Yo would become angry and leave the ungrateful wretch to himself. He had come to feel a sense of responsibility for Lavaud, and wanted to see him safely through. But Yo-Yo allowed the remarks to slide off unnoticed from his armor of contempt.

"He's a rude-mouthed old ——," Chaptel apologized for his friend, "but he's pretty near in his second childhood, and the 'pen' is not a place to learn manners."

"Let him talk," Yo-Yo said with a sad smile. "He merely voices aloud what others think. There is less disgust in his eyes than in those of many people who have called me monsieur. It's a relief to hear any man come out with his inner thoughts."

"I try to keep him quiet as much as I can."

"Don't bother. I only hope for his sake that he gets back where he won't have to see any man my color—" again he smiled slowly—"or rather with my sort of hair. Because I look pure white as to face, don't I?"

"Sure you do."

The following week saw them out of the jungle, and traveling through open plains, which Yo-Yo called *campos*. They met groups of Indians, poor looking creatures, armed with bows and arrows. The guide conversed with them in their own tongue. They were good people he said, who asked for nothing better than to live in peace. Chaptel, who had believed all Indians to be beardless, saw with surprize that many of these men had mustaches. Macouchis was their tribal name according to Yo-Yo. They had once lived nearer the coast line, but the first white invaders and the raids of warlike tribes of their own color had driven them back inland.

Yo-Yo trusted them sufficiently to rest in one of the villages. Chaptel became acquainted with *cachiri*, an alcohol made from sugar cane. He never touched it again after he was informed by Yo-Yo that the juice was procured by a primitive process: The women of the village chewed the cane and spat the juice into a container. One glance at the elderly dames sprawled in their wrinkled, greasy nakedness, and *cachiri* was forbidden to his not too sensitive stomach. In vain, Yo-Yo insisted that on occasion it was made in a crude mill.

With the village as a base, the three men investigated the surrounding country. Gold could be washed out in small quantities. Although working for Yo-Yo, Chaptel was enough interested to labor long hours. It was fascinating to sift the brilliant particles from the sand, and to think that the metal would find its way into the civilized world, to cause havoc, probably. On one occasion, Chaptel found two small nuggets, which he turned over to Yo-Yo. Lavaud was also lucky, but had to be compelled to give up his finds. Since the sight of gold, the old man seemed to have gone mad, could talk of nothing else.

"Big sacks of it!" he shouted jubilantly. "Big sacks, in the right place. Let's stay here, Chaptel, for a few years and get all we can."

"And die before we could get out, eh? Not much. I'd sooner see a railroad track than all the gold in Guiana."

Yo-Yo smiled and pensively weighed the small bags in his palm.

"I'll sell them when we get there," he murmured.

"Where?" asked Chaptel.

"Where we're going."

Their destination; that was one bit of information Chaptel could never obtain from Yo-Yo. Possibly the guide still feared that if the two knew their way, or believed they did, his life would be in danger. Convicts had been known to commit murder for less than the small amount of gold at hand.

"GOLD," Yo-Yo said one night, when the two lay before the fire in the *maloca*—hut—assigned to them by the villagers, "gold—I don't know why I want to find it. But I want to. Perhaps it's more for the thrill of coming back and announcing a big strike. Gold—the finding of gold in big quantities would make Guiana an important place, Chaptel. Men would come from all over the world. The convicts would be sent elsewhere. Cayenne would have a good harbor. Saint-Laurent would become a big city, with gambling saloons, dance halls and tall buildings. Look at California, Australia. Where would they be now, if gold had not been found there? You'll say the climate is better than here. I grant that. But it needs more than a good climate to attract men anywhere."

He paused thoughtfully, then went on:

"I picture myself, at times, coming back to Cayenne, placing a few sizable nuggets before the governor and saying— 'There's any amount at such and such a place!' Then sit back and watch things happen. Men from everywhere, I said, Frenchmen, Germans, Americans, all sorts. And I'd say to myself— 'You did all that, Yo-Yo!' "

"You're something of a Guianian, Yo-Yo. I didn't suspect you of so much love for your country."

"This isn't my country," said Yo-Yo. "I don't give a —— what becomes of it. But I'd enjoy the feeling of being the first cause for the movements of a quarter million men. Don't think I mean personal fame. I wouldn't care if my name was never mentioned. It's my own private satisfaction that would matter."

He lighted his pipe for a fifth time.

"If I did that—discovered gold in plenty—I'd be justifying the faith of a half hundred world-famous men. Do you know that early legends stated that El Dorado was in Guiana, more particularly in that part now French? In the sixteenth century, a Spanish pirate, Martinez, crawled back to Havana to die. On his deathbed he said that he had discovered immense gold deposits in the upper country of this very coast.

"He was a good Catholic, and would not have lied to a priest. I believe he told the truth. The English knight, Walter Raleigh, believed that too. He would have come back here if he had not been executed. How many looked for the fabulous Manoa d'Eldorado, I can't say. I found two skeletons, some years ago, in the thick bush by Mount Leblond. From the remnants of dress, they had died in the late sixteenth, or early seventeenth century. I brought back to Cayenne what was left of a rusty rapier. An official bought it for six hundred francs for a museum. The gold exists as Martinez said it did.

"Florimon, a Frenchman, around 1820, was shown a creek by a native, and picked up five pounds in nuggets right on the spot he stood on! He went crazy with the idea, rushed back to the coast, got backing, and was unable to find thereafter either the native who had guided him or the creek."

Lavaud, ten feet away, hoisted himself on his elbows.

"Sure, there's gold here, you sooty ape. I can find it if I stay long enough."

"Go to sleep, and give us a rest," Chaptel suggested roughly.

Yo-Yo talked on. Launched on the topic of gold, he could not be halted. His knowledge of the bush was paralleled by his erudition concerning the dim history of Guiana. From the discovery of the country by Vicente Yanez Pincon, to the actual time, he reeled off names and dates of the explorers. In broad outline he painted the early struggles, the arrival of white men, black slaves, and the gradual receding of the Indians into the interior. The epic tale of Poncet and his companions, greedy but brave, resisting the temptation to abandon the game, and massacred to the last man by the natives.

The fantastic expedition led by the *Abbe* Marivault and de Royville, eight hundred men in all, who started from Paris with high hopes of conquest. Marivault fell into the Seine River and was drowned at the start. De Royville was assassinated by his followers on the high seas. Then as now, Guiana was synonymous with blood. Of the eight hundred, only fifteen escaped alive to Suriname up the coast.

Yo-Yo was gifted with a pleasant voice and an ability to choose words. His recital became almost a chant, a saga. Chaptel saw the formidable figures of pirates and gentlemen of fortune, not always distinctly separated, rise out of the past, stride into the unknown with heroic swing, facing Indians, starvation, fever, in the hope of gold. But what pleases one man does not necessarily please another. Lavaud, interested, when the talk rolled on the present, gave up listening when historical events were mentioned, and soon was snoring.

Yo-Yo threw another stick on the fire.

"Tell me," said Chaptel abruptly, "tell me, Yo-Yo, where were you born, if not in Cayenne. And where did you learn all those details. And why are you here, helping two bums escape from —— instead of discoursing on history in some school in France, or anywhere else, for that matter?"

The guide touched his wool.

"That's why!"

He smiled, and Chaptel caught a glimpse of the real man behind the mask affected by Yo-Yo. The smile was bitter, self-mocking. No sane man smiled thus. No mad man, either, thought Chaptel The smile was not human. It was more than a grimace, more than a reflection of an emotion. It held all the rancor of a tortured mind.

"I once thought myself white. Would you believe it, Chaptel? I might as well tell you: What makes me suffer is not the scorn of others, but my own scorn. My earliest recollection is Senegal in Africa. My father was an officer down there. I had a real name, not Yo-Yo. There were blacks all about me. And I considered them as others did. I had learned, by the time I was ten, that I was not exactly like other children. There was much talk about my mother, who was dead.

"I caught a bit here and there; no one thought I noticed. My father had been stationed in Martinique, in the West Indies. It was there that I was born. I went with him everywhere after that, until he thought I needed more education. Then he sent me to France to a private school. I learned many things quickly. I guess, although I did not suspect it at the time, that the untired brains of my black ancestors gave me more mental vitality than is usual. I won the red-covered prize books, the laurel crown at the end of the school terms. I was somewhat of a hero among my comrades, because of my early travels.

"When I was about thirteen, big and strong for my age, getting to be a man, an unbelievable thing happened. My hair, until then, had been curly and black, but not woolly. I guess my strain of black showed with puberty. It got woolly, my hair did. At first I liked the feel of it. When my father came home I told him. And he told me the truth. Can you conceive the colossal unconcern of the man? To let me shape my life white, and then laugh it off as he did when he saw my wool? The fact preyed on me. I still went to school, and had lost interest. When I had served my time of service, in the cavalry, I applied and obtained a colonial position in the government. I was sent to Cayenne.

"I was thin-skinned. I soon saw that I was rated among the 'creoles'. I kept by myself, and studied furiously, to forget. I read all the books to be had on Guiana, and suddenly got the gold madness. I chucked up the job and set out. And that's all I've done ever since. I never saw my father, after what he told me. I guess he was afraid of me. He died some years back. I have half brothers and sisters in France who got the money. He was right to forget me. I wish he'd forgotten me earlier in Martinique."

"But why do you make money illegally? It doesn't seem in your character. You don't like us convicts."

"Why? It amuses me to turn you back upon France and the rest of the world." Yo-Yo laughed loudly. "White men—white men—white men!"

Chaptel made no remark. Yo-Yo went on and on. Gradually his discourse became more and more entangled. He mentioned events that had occurred in Guiana, and which he said he had witnessed, when but a few moments before he had said that at that time he was in France! He spoke of his grandmother, smoking a pipe on the threshold of a hut.

It suddenly dawned upon Chaptel that the sad tale was fiction, made up by the imaginative Yo-Yo to color his character, the same impulse that caused him to hunt for gold that he might startle the universe with his discoveries. Yo-Yo was insane, far more insane than the old man, Lavaud, asprawl in the dark corner.

It was a horrible plight, this being cooped up with two maniacs. He began to doubt his own sanity. The fleeting smiles on Yo-Yo's face were disturbing. He must not let him know that he suspected the truth. But Yo-Yo was far from being disconcerted. He was lost in an imaginary world of his own. His voice rose higher and higher. The yarns had brought him to a dangerous pitch of exaltation. Chaptel quietly spread his blanket and stretched out.

He tried to keep awake, but presently dozed off into a deep sleep, and the last he heard was Yo-Yo's reiterated words:

"White men! White men!"

AFTER leaving the Indian village, they roamed in the unchartered territory south of a high mountain, which Chaptel later learned was Mount Leblond. They spent days and nights in deep, damp gullies, on wind swept plateaus, in the jungle. In the leather pouch slung over Yo-Yo's back bounced little bags of gold-dust.

Lavaud now boasted a long gray beard and a mane of snowy hair, which, combined with his wrinkled, puffy face, gave him the startling appearance of a dissolute patriarch. Yo-Yo had kept his face clean-shaven.

Chaptel had learned the fact, that in spite of his muscular frame and utter oblivion to fatigue, he was but two years under sixty.

Chaptel, when he took the trouble to gaze into an *igarapey limpa*, Yo-Yo's term for a limpid brook, could scarcely believe that the brown, lean, black-bearded face was his. Debilitating as the climate was supposed to be, none of the three men had been harmed. The quinin, the plain fare, the constant exercise, had kept them in condition. They were all suffering from insect bites, and Lavaud had eczema, a little annoyance, indeed, compared with what Chaptel had been led to expect.

One hundred and twelve days after the first meeting with Yo-Yo, they came to the first white man's dwellings, a Brazilian military outpost, on the right bank of the Aragouary River. A score of huts, similar to those of the natives, a crudely erected church, a cemetery with dilapidated wooden crosses, a staked enclosure holding a few oxen, that was all. The soldiers were ragged. They had old rifles, antiquated bayonets that did not fit their guns, and no shoes. But one of them was pure white. The others were Indians, negroes and the various racial subdivisions that can be created by a free mixture of white, black and red. These soldiers had their families with them.

As warriors they were not impressing. They sat about gloomily, without pretense of desire to be ready to exercise their calling. Even the oxen seemed a prey to the all-prevailing boredom.

Yo-Yo sought the commander and presented a paper bearing the official stamp of the French government, and accrediting Messieurs Pardon, Picard and Marechal—Yo-Yo, Chaptel and Lavaud—gold prospectors, to the Brazilian authorities. This sort of passport, Yo-Yo had told Chaptel, was easy enough to obtain. He had a mulatto friend in government service who refused no request accompanied by a twenty-franc gold coin.

The white commander, *Tenente*—Lieutenant—Manoel da Morea, had been born in Rio. He was as ragged as his men, but his manner was that of a perfect gentleman. He did his best to accommodate his unexpected guests, and took a particular liking to Chaptel. Without anything being said, the officer had decided "Picard" was the head of the party, "Pardon" his guide and "Marechal" his servant. Yo-Yo made it clear that it would be best to leave him under this impression, and Lavaud grumblingly assumed his rôle, which consisted chiefly in finishing the bottles from the table.

Manoel da Morea spoke fluent French, had studied in Paris, had even represented his country at maneuvers in France. He did not like the life in the outpost, he declared, but a soldier had to take the bad with the good. He would not listen to Chaptel's early departure and invited him to remain a week under his roof, to rest, as he put it, from the arduous trip so adventurously taken. Chaptel was aware that the invitation was not free from self-interest. Morea wanted to talk, make up for his months of loneliness. He purchased the gold with Brazilian money, which he paid to Chaptel. Yo-Yo accepted half and told Chaptel he could keep the rest.

"There is all of Guiana to supply me with more—and it has been pleasant to talk to a man of the class I should have belonged to," he said.

Morea, who had many friends in the Brazilian Government, insisted that he should write letters of introduction to the officials in Macapa, in Para, and even in Rio, if the prospector should care to visit the metropolis in South America. Chaptel hesitated to accept this proof of friendship from a man he was deceiving. But protestation would have awakened suspicion.

Morea expressed the opinion that one must be uncomfortable in Cayenne, due to the number of convicts there.

"In my opinion," he said, "they should be shot instead of allowed to roam at large. Lucky for them not one ever comes this way. I wouldn't waste much time with him. *Crack*—gone!" Morea pointed at Lavaud, basking in the sun outside, chatting with a group of natives. "I spotted him. He's a free man and your servant now. But he was once one of *them*."

"I think he was," admitted Chaptel, "but he's a good old man now."

"Perhaps — perhaps. Beware of him, however. He's too familiar with you. Allow those dogs to take an inch and they swallow you!"

Chaptel therefore hastened his departure. Morea was not a fool. From suspecting

Lavaud to gradually suspecting him was but a narrow step.

When he left he promised to write Morea, and was compelled to give him a fictitious address in France, where Morea declared, he would come to see him and renew the pleasant friendship begun in the desolate jungle on the banks of the Aragouary. A last kindness he forced upon Chaptel an escort of four soldiers to protect him and help him on the hard journey to Macapa.

The distance between the outpost and Macapa was about ninety miles, which Yo-Yo said could be easily covered in a week. The road was bad, partly through thick brush, partly over rough, stony soil. The scenery was monotonous, depressing. But it could be felt that they were nearing inhabited areas. They had been weeks without glimpsing signs of a fire. Now, when night came, they could see the reflection of flames against the sky. Desultory cattle grazing, ineffectual attempts at agriculture were the industries of the country-side. Ragged *vaqueiros*, mounted on gaunt ponies passed the little party, grinning in salutation, yellow teeth in saddle-colored faces.

On the third day, the sky being clear, Chaptel perceived mountains in the distance. Yo-Yo was satisfied with the progress made. Chaptel noticed that Lavaud sought every occasion to speak to the guide in private, and that the two engaged in long arguments, in which the old convict seemed to be pleading, and Yo-Yo refusing.

At length Lavaud came to him.

"I have asked Coal-Tar to take me back with him, as far as those creeks we saw. He won't do it."

"Are you crazy? What difference is there between suffering at the creeks and suffering in Cayenne? You're too old to take any more chances, Lavaud."

"There's gold up there, heaps of it. Since I saw what we got in just a few days playing around, I know I could make enough to be rich. What is there for me in the world, if I have no money? All I had went to Magre. This way I'll just be an old bum, without a friend on the whole earth."

"You should have thought of that before you started."

Lavaud rubbed his chin musingly.

"I'm not so sure that I wouldn't want to go back to Cayenne. I feel that I wouldn't die as long as I was planning to get out again. That keeps a fellow alive."

Suddenly Lavaud bent his head and snuffed loudly. To Chaptel's amazement he began to sob.

"Come out of it, old man," Chaptel invited. "I didn't mean to be rough with you."

"What do I care about you!" Lavaud retorted defiantly. "What I feel brokenhearted over is that I won't have anything to think of now. I'm getting old and it's hard to get a new interest."

This absurd scene grated on Chaptel's nerves. Here was Lavaud, actually homesick for Cayenne and the Isle of Silence, missing the constant planning, the longing for freedom. He seemed to want Cayenne even more than the gold.

"Go and talk to Yo-Yo," Chaptel suggested.

But Lavaud was discouraged. He continued to weep. His shoulders sagged and he declared himself worn out. Chaptel was for making a long halt, but Yo-Yo declared that he saw through the old man's trick. Lavaud wanted to be left behind, to wait for Yo-Yo's return and dog his steps back to the alluring creeks, and perhaps Cayenne.

Chaptel informed Lavaud that Yo-Yo never traveled the same road twice, that he would take a different route on the way back. He pointed out that the guide could not afford to become too well known to Morea or any other officer, for they would suspect that the constantly changing prospectors bound for Macapa were not as innocent as they pretended to be.

"All right—walk on. I'll follow," Lavaud said meekly.

Chaptel and Yo-Yo had to wait for him repeatedly. Lavaud breathed loudly, and his face was white. Chaptel felt his head, his wrists and assured himself that it was not fever that dragged so heavily upon the senior member of the group. He began to worry. Anything was likely to happen to a man of Lavaud's age, after the arduous journey through Guiana.

He called a stop under a convenient tree, and Lavaud threw himself on the ground. He never regained his feet again. He became delirious, he seemed to have lost consciousness of his surroundings, and addressed himself to persons he had known formerly, and whom he thought were near by.

"How do you expect pigs to grow fat on dish-water, Rosalie?" he shouted. "Potato peelings, old bread, that's what they need."

"Be quiet, Lavaud. Rest easy for today, and you'll be all right in the morning."

"*Monsieur le Juge*," pleaded Lavaud, before an imaginary court of justice, "I didn't shoot that game-keeper, I swear I didn't. We had words the night before, that's true. And he had arrested me for shooting a rabbit. But look at me! Am I a man that would kill a game-keeper? He was shot in the morning, and that morning I was on the way to the fair with three pigs in the wagon!"

Chaptel forced the spout of his canteen between his teeth, and poured down a long drink of *tafia*, strong alcohol, parting gift of Lieutenant Morea. Then he turned to Yo-Yo—

"What's the matter with him?"

"I don't know. I have seen others die like that, after they knew they were out. He isn't very strong, I guess."

"You think he'll die?"

Yo-Yo nodded.

Chaptel shook Lavaud trying to bring him into momentary calm.

"Eh, Lavaud, what's your address? Where does that sister of yours live? Can't you talk? You're badly off, and I guess she'd like to know what happened to you."

"I couldn't have shot him. I was going to the fair with three pigs in the wagon."

"What fair?" begged Chaptel, hoping to get some indication of the town.

If the situation had been reversed he would have wanted his family to be informed, rather than that they should worry over a long-unexplained silence.

"The country fair, of course," said Lavaud.

Chaptel wiped his face.

"Where did you live, Lavaud? What did you do?"

"Went to the fair with three pigs in a wagon."

Lavaud's agony lasted several hours. His answers to Chaptel's questions never varied. The names of places he did mention were so general that they could have been applied to any French village. The Golden Lion Café, the store next to the church, the old house near the fountain, these could not be called precisions. When night came, Yo-Yo made a fire, and Chaptel still watched by the old man, hoping against hope that he would have a lucid moment.

At last Lavaud sat up bruskly with an indignant gesture.

"How could I, with three pigs in a wagon!"

He sank back; his jaw dropped.

AND Chaptel, who had not shed a tear in years, cried over the old fellow. He had never heard of the game-keeper, and knew that Lavaud was quite capable of lying to himself even in an unconscious condition. The man had lived hard, suffered greatly—and he was dead under the stars in this lonesome corner of the immense forest.

The soldiers, who had been lagging behind, arrived at noon the next day. They consented to dig a grave, not overdeep, however, for they soon tired. Yo-Yo removed his hat ceremoniously and said a prayer in Latin. The soldiers knelt, and Chaptel imitated them. The guide proceeded unctuously, his words resounding under the trees.

"Amen," Yo-Yo ended, then, without transition, "We can go now."

The soldiers crossed themselves a last time, then evidently fearing a fate similar to that of Lavaud if they hurried unduly, found comfortable resting places by the road, not twenty feet from the newly made grave, and went to sleep.

Four days later, the two reached Macapa, from which, Yo-Yo informed Chaptel, a steam-boat would take him down the Amazon River to Santa-Maria de Belem de Grao Para, known as Belem to the convicts and as Para to the Brazilians.

Yo-Yo did not enter the city.

"I stop here," he announced.

"You start back right away?"

"Yes. I never enter the place. I do not care to be well known. It is better that you should go in alone."

"Then I'm all alone."

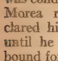
"You're luckier than the others who have no money, and are compelled to join the beachcombers. You have money for the gold and can buy your passage for Belem. There, ships come from all parts of the world. Good luck."

He turned without another word, and strode back in the direction from which they had come. Chaptel saw the tall, massive figure round a clump of orange trees, and his last connection with Cayenne and his former life was gone.

He was puzzled, half-afraid to enter the town. He had an uncertain feeling of being naked, for he was deprived of companionship and in a strange place. But he stepped forward resolutely, entered the first café, showed the letters of introduction, was conducted to the fort, where a friend of Morea received him cordially, and declared himself willing to serve as mentor until he was safely on the river steamer bound for Para.

The way opened wide for him. Where would he go? Should he stay in Brazil, or seek a new life elsewhere?

"Come with me, Monsieur Picard," his host suggested. "I wish you to tell my friends of your adventures in the bad woods. We'll open a bottle or two, and show you that if Macapa is not Paris, a good drink makes for a cheerful evening!"



"WHAT'S wrong with you, Picard?" Henri Zimmer asked suddenly.

"With me?" Chaptel repeated. "What's wrong? The heat, I guess."

The heat of the immense city seemed in fact to pour in through the open window and fill the small room from wall to wall. The cigaret smoke clung to the dingy curtains and shredded lazily toward the airshaft. The clang of metal, the rattle of the elevated on Ninth Avenue, New York City, added din to the heat. Chaptel, naked, lay on the bed trying to sleep. Zimmer, the Alsatian, occupied a worn easy chair, reading a newspaper absent-mindedly, smoking cigaret after cigaret, the intervals being filled by long swallows of beer.

"That doesn't sound true to me, Picard," he insisted. "Look here, I've known you almost a year. You think I'm a friend of yours, don't you? Can't you tell me what ails you lately?"

"A year," Chaptel said musingly. "That long, Zimmer?"

"Sure!"

Chaptel sighed, pulled the top sheet as far as his armpits, and sighed again.

He had been in New York twelve months. It was therefore almost two years since he had entered Macapa, since he had left Yo-Yo. Yes, it must be two years, for the nightmares in which he was recaptured by the police disturbed him no longer.

In Belem he had avoided mixing with the other escaped men on the beach. Morea's letters made a path for him. He had gained Port of Spain, Trinidad and New Orleans without difficulty. Then, his money had given out.

At the time, he could speak but a few words of English and fell back upon the French sailors on shore leave for help. He told them that circumstances made it impossible for him to ship on a French vessel, and that he wished to reach New York. They presumed him to be a deserter from a merchant steamer, and having had moments when they themselves had been tired of their surroundings, understood.

Through them Chaptel became acquainted with a Frenchman who held the position of cook on an American vessel. Chaptel realized the need of some sort of trade and stayed with him until he had mastered the elements of the culinary art. At last, thinking himself equipped to face life in the North American metropolis, he shook hands with the cook, and went ashore.

There are many Frenchmen in hotel kitchens in New York. But they form a closed fraternity, and unless a man has the proper introductions, he finds it hard to get work. Chaptel found people colder and colder toward a petitioner for help the further north he had traveled. He was turned away everywhere and his last dollar dwindled to two dimes and a nickel.

At this critical moment a sign in the window of a lunch counter on West Street near the docks attracted his attention. A dish-washer was wanted. Chaptel entered, agreed to the conditions laid down by the proprietor, which he could not understand, his knowledge of English still being limited. And he washed dishes: Thick cups, thick plates, evidently made for length of service, greasy tin forks, spoons, heaps of them, for sixteen hours a day. He was free, and better off than in Guiana, but still this was not his idea of happiness.

He was lonely. Every night, he walked up and down West Street at times as far as the Chelsea Docks, where he could meet French sailors from the pier on Fifteenth Street. These men showed him little sympathy. The down and outers were too numerous to be listened to. He had no chance to explain that he did not want money, but the sound of his own tongue.

At last, he halted Zimmer, who was returning from a lengthy visit to a steward. Zimmer was happy, cheerful. He told

Chaptel that he had also tasted bitter moments.

Chaptel introduced himself as Picard, thinking the name given him by Yo-Yo as good as any. Together they had gone to an arm-chair restaurant and talked matters over. Zimmer was an Alsatian. When he was two years old his family emigrated to a manufacturing town in Connecticut. His French was far from musical—he mixed it with German and English words. But his heart was good.

He immediately acquired a sense of responsibility over his casual acquaintance, scoffed at the idea that Chaptel should go back to dish-washing in the morning. He took him to his room and declared that from this night onward, he and Chaptel would be friends, that he guaranteed him a job as bus-boy in the cabaret where he was employed.

Chaptel soon became a full-fledged waiter. He was tall, good looking and was granted the privilege of serving tables near the dancing floor, where tips are heaviest.

As soon as he had saved a sufficient amount of money, he declared his intention of leaving his position to look for work in a garage, as he had some mechanical training. Zimmer could not understand this. Picard was making good money, he declared, more than he could make at any other trade. Moreover, it would separate them, for Zimmer would work nights, and Picard days. Chaptel sacrificed his personal inclinations and remained with his friend.

He did not like waiting—not from a false pride, but because it did not require the use of his fingers in the intricate manner machinery demanded. But Zimmer had been kind to him, and he did not want to annoy him in the slightest manner. It can not be said that he was unhappy; he had come to appreciate good food, clean living quarters and personal liberty. The petty annoyances were nothing to what he had endured. The scolding of the majestic head-waiter was mild, compared to the bitter tongue lashings of Marietti, Bichet and Magre.

The growling of the gentleman who wanted to impress his companion with his exacting sense of proper table service he met politely. He had the ready smile for the well-known patron, who beamed his satisfaction at public recognition from a man employed in the gayest place in town. The former *costaud* was often threatened with bodily violence by inebriate gentlemen. He learned that a rush order consisted of a swift search for left-overs.

He had informed his father of his successful escape. He corresponded with his parents cautiously, had assigned a general delivery address for his mail. And he was homesick, desperately homesick. He struggled against that feeling, told himself that Lavaud had been recaptured through gratifying a like impulse. To go back home would almost certainly mean walking into a trap.

And Zimmer was asking him what was the matter.

"Come on, Picard, what's wrong?" Zimmer repeated.

"To tell the truth, I'm homesick."

"You have enough money for your fare to France and back. I have a few dollars that would be better off in circulation. Take the next boat, and visit your folks."

"I can't go back."

Zimmer pursed his lips, whistled.

"You ducked your military service, did you?"

"Something of the kind."

"How long ago did you leave?"

"About seven years ago."

"Would many people know your face?"

"I think I've changed a lot. I was not much more than a kid, then."

"Suppose you grew a mustache, a beard, even. Anyway, you wouldn't need to go into the place where you'd lived. Stay at a place some distance away, and get your folks to come and see you."

"I'm afraid that I might be questioned. I have no papers."

"That's easy," said Zimmer. "I'll give you my birth certificate, and a bunch of letters written to me. You'll be Henry Zimmer, German subject, born in Alsace."

Chaptel propped himself up on one elbow. "Could I get away with it?"

"Why not?"

"And you?"

"I have my American citizenship papers. That's all I need."

Chaptel reached over and grasped his hand.

"Only, you better be careful and not visit Alsace. The Germans would pull you into the army as quick as a wink. And with your temper, you could never stand being bossed about by a thick-necked sergeant. You can't imagine what army life is like! I had a brother who stayed in the old country. You ought to hear him tell about it. Kicks—swear-words!"

Chaptel smiled. Then his face set sternly. Could he accept Zimmer's identity and leave him in ignorance of his former life? It was a great temptation to take the papers and keep silent. But presuming the worst happened, and he was caught by the French police, what would Zimmer think? No. He had full right to risk his own liberty, but no right to destroy a man's faith in humanity.

"I guess that's all a dream," he declared wearily. "Can't be done."

Zimmer was almost violent in his insistence. His accent in French was terrific, and Chaptel thought he saw a way out.

"Listen, Zimmer, I can't speak German."

"It's only right that you don't speak German," Zimmer pointed out triumphantly. "You left home when you were two years old. You'll be one poor fellow from the land that was lost in the war. Everybody will say you're right not to speak that pig German language. No?"

Chaptel was forced to admit the logic of this argument. There was but one way to make Zimmer understand.

"If I told you I had been a convict, Zimmer, would you still want me to use your birth certificate?"

It was some time before Zimmer recovered from his astonishment.

"What others say you did, what you did, I don't care," Zimmer said. "I like you, and that's all I want to know."

"You might get into trouble."

"You're the hardest fellow to do a favor for, I ever met!" sputtered Zimmer. "Maybe you think it is this way: If Zimmer had been in Sing Sing, he would not be your friend? No? Yes, he would." The Alsatian nevertheless caught some of Chaptel's emotion, and his voice became throaty: "Have a glass of beer. That's good in hot weather."

Chaptel held up his glass in silence.

All was settled—on the surface. But it would need more than a birth certificate and a plausible story to clear him if he were suspected. To go back was sheer madness. The much criticised French police counts among its members genuinely intelligent men, peculiarly gifted for their calling. One glance at his nose, his forehead, his eyes and the recollection of a small photograph seen on a filing card— Chaptel would not know of this. He would go on, living quietly, becoming more and more secure, and feel a hand on his shoulder just when he would least expect it.

The identification, the convict-ship, Cayenne, the trial which would add five years to the eight earned through striking Bichet—the dreaded mark would be passed, and his *doublage* would swallow the rest of his life. The Isle of Silence, the bush, attempted escape, the Isle of Silence again. He might never succeed in escaping, for there was not always at hand a greedy Magre of a maniacal Yo-Yo. An endless round, that would be his, until he was thrown into the sea to the sharks.

Or again, Lavaud's fate. Death in the forest, delirium.

"Three pigs in a wagon!"

But the homing instinct was too strong, could not be denied. Chaptel was able to face chance calmly for the sake of seeing his people, his home. A strange thing is man, guided by instincts that are not always for his good, instincts that he can not resist.

Two weeks later, he sailed for Havre.

IN THE deserted waiting-room of the station, he paused to examine himself in the mirror surmounting a machine which supplied chocolate for the insignificant sum of two sous. He remembered this particular machine. There had been a time when he was compelled to stand on tip-toes to insert the coin in the slot. He cleared his throat with a hearty cough, unwilling to admit the emotion that gripped him.

It was not likely that he would be recognized. The nine days on the sea had browned his face. He was certain that he had grown taller, heavier and the black mustache completed the change from the loose-limbed, pink-cheeked lad who had left seven years before. He turned down the brim of his felt hat, buttoned his light top coat to the throat, and swung out into the open place before the station.

The gendarme on duty, small and fat, Chaptel had known. He had once arrested him for throwing stones at the pigeons near the town hall. His heart stood still when the uniformed man brought his hand to the peak of his cap. He had forgotten that greetings were tendered to strangers in his home town.

"*Bonjour, Monsieur,*" said the gendarme.

"*Bonjour.*"

The officer was loquacious, and volunteered the facts that the day promised to be clear, that he could see the gentleman was a stranger in town and that he took it upon himself to recommend the inn three streets down from the station. Omelets—one would smack his lips three hours after eating those omelets. And the wine that tasted like nothing but radiant sunshine in one's soul.

"What is the name of that inn?" asked Chaptel, who could not have passed it less than a thousand times.

"The Silver Bell. Say that Hamel, the gendarme, sent you!"

"*Merci—au revoir.*"

Chaptel entered the Inn of the Silver Bell and ordered omelet and wine. He had eaten shortly before at a preceding station but thought it best to conduct himself in this leisurely and carefree manner. The serving maid grumbled at the unusual hour; it lacked forty minutes of six!

Chaptel strolled out once more and by circling through many streets made his way toward his old home. The milk carts, drawn by large dogs, were the only vehicles on the move. Chaptel recognized the woman who had always brought milk to his home. He had spent a three weeks vacation at her farm once. But she did not recognize him. Nothing had changed but himself.

The town seemed smaller, of course, ridiculously small. He had seen large cities and was rather disappointed. Distances had shrunk apparently, for he soon found himself standing before his own door. It was unlocked. He remembered that the man on the top floor, a retired army officer, went for a walk at four o'clock every morning. He must be still alive, and still walking, for there was the street door open.

The semi-darkness of the stair-case, the smell of dust and polishing oil, seemed familiar, as did the feel of the round, hardwood ball ending the last pole of the bannister.

"The third step creaks," he told himself, and avoided the third step as he had done in other days, when coming back too late for parental approval.

"Third floor—here we are!" he whispered.

He stood before the door, his heart beating savagely, shaking him like the vibration of a motor.

He tried the handle; the door was not locked. He opened the panel. Through the hall he could see the little dining room, the same carpet, the black-wood buffet. He could see a corner of a picture, a colored print depicting a herd of cows in a grassy field, with slim poplars lining the horizon. Not daring to move, he stood there, back against the wall, breathing hard.

He noticed a change; the furniture was dusty. A dreadful fear crept into his heart. Some one was moving in the kitchen. He heard the clatter of a coffeepot being replaced on the stove. Then a step, that of his father, crossed the floor.

Chaptel saw him. He had aged—his mustache was white. His face was lined. And he was preparing his own breakfast. There was no woman in the house: No French woman would have permitted him to lay a hot dish on the table top without protection for the wood. Chaptel felt the tears roll down his nose. This was what he had feared. His mother was dead. She had not been able to survive all the anxieties he had caused her. He had killed her as surely as if he had driven a knife into her heart. He was inclined to close the door without saying a word, take the next train out of town and return to America.

But his father had seen him. He started, and challenged the intruder.

"What do you want? Can't you knock, instead of creeping in like a thief! You made my heart jump!"

Chaptel walked into the room and stood in the light of the window.

"Don't you know me, Monsieur Chaptel?"

"Edmond! Thunder!"

"Mother ——"

He broke off and could not go on.

"What's wrong with her?"

"She isn't—! She isn't ——"

"No, she's spending a few weeks in the country. She was sick for a while when we didn't hear from you. But when she knew you were safe in New York she got better. Did any one see you coming in here?"

"No."

"Right after you escaped, I had two or three visits. I thought it was one of the police come back again when I saw you."

"They're watching?"

"Not always. But every once in a while, an inspector of police comes around. I've been careful of the letters I sent you, though."

Chaptel showed him his papers and explained how he got them.

"It's not safe for me to stay near here," he said. "I'll go to Belfort, near the border. I can be in Alsace in two jumps."

Then he sat down and told his father of his escape.

"Thunder! You've traveled, *mon p'tit*, you've traveled!" the old man said enviously. "You know I've always wanted to do that sort of thing. But I got married, then you came. That Yo-Yo, now, how old did you say he was?"

Chaptel gave the desired details. His father's eyes glowed.

"What are you doing now?" Chaptel asked. "Still at the same place?"

"Yes, my employer says business is slow. People are nervous around here. Since that Austrian fellow was shot, two weeks ago, there's been talk of war. If it comes to a head, you can get back to America in time." He shrugged sadly. "That's all you care to do, I guess. The army and France have been pretty bad for you."

He seemed to feel the humiliation keenly, having a boy that could not serve in case the long-expected War broke out at last.

"You better not stay here too long," the old man advised. "There's a train tonight at eleven for Belfort. You had the good sense to come early. Going out late you stand the same chance of not being discovered."

He glanced at his watch.

"I'm due at the office. I don't dare stay away. Some one might come to see what was the matter. I'll try to get off early. In the meanwhile there's enough to eat in the kitchen."

AFTER he was gone, Chaptel, who was not hungry, sat down in the arm chair. War would not come, he told himself. How many times within his memory had it been predicted? In his boyhood he had seen troops rush through the streets in the middle of the night, bound for the border. All these rumors had dwindled and the fighting had not started. This was but another scare.

He spent the day rumaging through drawers, reading old books. His father returned at nightfall, laden with packages. There was roast chicken, bottles of olives and cherries, truffles, two quarts of Pomard, cognac and the cigarets that he had prefered.

"I took the chance that no one would suspect that you were my company for tonight," the old man grinned. "Your mother would feed you and I guess that's what I should do."

At quarter of eleven, he took his leave and went to the station. Hamel was not there. The gendarme on duty paid no attention to him. In another five minutes, he was safe in a compartment of the train rolling toward Belfort.

Several days elapsed before his mother came. Doubtless the father had tempered her impatience, and warned her against too great haste. In the mean while, Chaptel was bored. The music halls did not interest him. He was longing to be back in New York, where he would be free from the haunting fear of arrest. And the sense of impending calamity was in the air. Troops were pouring by night into the city. Officers strutted about with a preoccupied air. Gendarmes and policemen were scanning strangers with keen eyes, scenting possible spies. Even when he had explained to his landlord, that although his name was Zimmer, he was not German but an Alsatian, the man had not appeared satisfied. Almost any moment he might expect to be taken to police headquarters and questioned.

He momentarily forgot his worries when his mother arrived. She could not hear enough of his wanderings, exclaimed angrily over Magre, pityingly over Lavaud, and said that Henri Zimmer was the best man alive. Chaptel knew that she should return immediately, and that he should go, but he did not have the courage to tell her.

The order of mobilization came on the second of August, 1914. Belfort was an important point in the defense of the French Eastern Frontier. The first surge of the German attack was expected here.

"You can't go into Germany now," his mother said. "You better take the next train into Switzerland while there is still time. Then you can go down into Italy, and get a boat to America."

Chaptel went to the window. On the street, soldiers were marching. The day before, they had seemed ridiculous, in their baggy, garish clothing. Now, they swung together like a machine, with a set look upon their faces, straining forward. War was in the future, and was all glory and triumph. The air was as if charged with electricity. The united energy emanating from these young men swept Chaptel strangely. He shook like a leaf. The bugles caught at something within him, strings that had never vibrated. And suddenly, it seemed monstrous that any men, not French, should come into Belfort, into his home, while he was forced to run away.

"Right by fours—March!"

The voice of a sergeant, with a ring identical to that of Marietti. But Chaptel stiffened at the command.

"My ——, mother, I'm afraid I can't run away."

"Why not?"

"I don't know what to say—how to explain. I know it's crazy for me to want to do anything for a nation that's crushed me—all that was worth while in me—I know this will make more worry for you, but I can't go."

"You're no longer French. Guiana has unnaturalized you, Edmond. You're yourself, that's all."

The shrill yell of a woman pierced through the pounding of feet.

"*Vive la France!*"

Chaptel struck his head with his hands. Tears came to his eyes.

"I'm crazy, I'm crazy!" he shouted. "I know what France has done to me. I know that those poor fools will get killed for some one else. I know all that. And here I am, caught by it. *Vive la France!* Shoutting it means much the same for me as shouting—*Vive la Guyane! Vive Biribi! Vive Bichet, Marietti, Magre!*"

His mother was silent, not urging him to either course.

"What would you want me to do, mother?" he asked helplessly. "Stay? Go? What? I haven't the strength to make a decision. You say what you want, what you think is right."

"Edmond, God knows I don't want you to be killed. I don't want you to suffer any more. But the others are going." She began to weep, quietly. "And, Heaven forgive me, I want you to go with them—because I love you—it's hard to say, hard to understand why. I guess it's one of those things like the tides of the sea that you just can't help. Some time some one may invent something better than one's country—but I— I ——"

Chaptel laughed. He remembered the Cayenne saying about the flag, the flag now passing beneath the window: Red, white and blue: red with blood, white with fear, blue with sickness. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Liberty to die of hunger, equality in misery, and Cain-like fraternity. France marching at the head of civilization, with the unnamable horrors of Guiana straggling behind. His reason rebelled, but his heart was trapped.

"I'm going—I'm going!" Then he hesitated. "But how can I? I'm not considered fit to fight. I'm a convict."

"You have Zimmer's papers."

"Under his name? He could not go into a French regiment, would have to enter the Foreign Legion." He paused, dazzled. "The Foreign Legion—there's a recruiting bureau here—a man told me so in the *Bat' d'Af!* Right or wrong, I'm going—now, this afternoon."

His mother, between dabs at her eyes with her handkerchief, had packed her baggage. He closed his bags with alacrity.

"I'll put you in a cab for the station, mother. You go home, and tell the old man I fell for his stuff. That'll crack a grin out of him. You take my bags with you. I won't need them—until it's over—for everybody or for me."

A few minutes, and the parting was over. As Chaptel looked after the cab as it disappeared around the corner, he involuntarily thought of Yo-Yo vanishing around the orange-tree clump. Then he was going into a new life. Now, also.

WITHIN two hours he was a member of the Foreign Legion, and in the Belfort barracks, awaiting his assignment to a central unit. Grinning boys—many of them reminded him of Zimmer—chatted in German. They were Alsatians. At the last moment, the queer call had come to them, they had felt that their place was with the French, Two days later he left Belfort for the rear areas, for Lyons. On the train he heard various rumors: The French had smashed the German Army in Alsace, had taken Mulhausen, which was again called

Mulhouse. The gray tide of Prussians, Bavarians, Saxons, was flooding through Belgium. Liege was holding out. He wrote to his parents. His first doubts had vanished. His whole soul was in the fight.

The letter from his mother came. The first paragraphs were the usual news. His mother was hoping that he would not be hurt, that all would be over before his time came. Then, in the next line, she told him that she knew he would distinguish himself. Chaptel smiled, thinking that she wanted nothing less than a war with the maximum of success and honors and the minimum of danger for her only son.

The last item made him start: —

> There is a Providence watching over you, Edmond. When I got to the station, I saw many gendarmes and policemen. They were arresting men bound for Switzerland. It seems that no one whose business is not absolutely clear will escape investigation. I am sure that if you had tried to go you would have been caught, and sent back to that awful place. I was still wondering at the time why I told you to go. I guess I felt it inside me, as we mothers do.

"Lucky there's a Providence for men with careless mothers!" Chaptel muttered. "If that letter had been ripped open by an officer I'd be in a mess!" Looking more closely at the envelope, he saw a seal, that of his battalion commander. The letter *had* been opened.

This meant another few days worry for him. Needless worry, it proved. For after an inspection, previous to entraining for the front, the major beckoned to Chaptel.

"Your name is Henri Zimmer?"

"*Oui, mon commandant.*"

"You're an Alsatian, aren't you?"

Chaptel breathed an answer.

"Then you're in the right place," the major went on. "I expect great things from you, my lad. Alsatians are our best soldiers."

FOR two years, Chaptel fought in all the engagements in which the Foreign Legion took part. He was with the men who went over the top in the unit's initial assault in the Great War, on December 22nd, 1914, north of Prunay, during the retaking of Zouaves' Wood. On the 9th of May, 1915, he left the trenches of France and with the others entered the famous White Works, or Hill 140. He saw Majors Noire, Muller and Gaubert fall. He was alive and unhurt at the end.

In the Legion there was no half-way mark; either one distinguished ones self, or was killed. Chaptel came out and was decorated: *Medaille Militaire*, and the inseparable *Croix de Guerre*. September 28, 1915, he went forward again in the fierce assault that just fell short of ending the War. He was a sergeant then. He took a satisfactory part in the attack on Navarin Farm and the fighting in the wood about that place. The Cross of the Legion of Honor joined the first two.

These engagements had taken many men. The two regiments of the Legion were reformed into one, under Lieutenant-Colonel Cot. As part of the celebrated Moroccan Division, the regiment was called when veteran troops were needed, troops that could suffer immense losses, and keep after their objective. There never has existed, throughout the history of the world, a better fighting aggregation than the war time *Legion Etrangère.*

In July, 1916, Chaptel received his first wound; a shell splinter in the left side. That was during the bayonet charge into Belloy. He took this opportunity to ask for a transfer into the aviation. His record, the intelligence he had shown in handling situations within his scope, made this easy. January, 1917, found him an Adjutant, pilot of a chase plane.

His success was almost immediate. He had that rare gift, a flying sense. He was at once cool and audacious. He had the mental balance to discriminate between necessary daring and rashness. A mission entrusted to him was fulfilled.

It was the custom, in his squad, to paint a distinguishing design on the individual planes. When asked what mark he prefered, Chaptel impulsively suggested a huge pip of spades. Many thought this a conceit. Chaptel was considered an ace, for he had long before brought down his fifth plane.

The design caught the fancy of the troopers in the trenches. They referred to him as *L'As de Pique*, the Ace of Spades, and invariably saluted when he flew over. Among men in the service, he was well known, well liked. His unselfishness was proverbial. A tale ran the rounds of the various fields: A very young pilot, newly decorated, due for leave, had evidenced traces of nervousness before his last flight. Chaptel had just returned from a flight over the lines, had hoisted himself into the boy's machine, and before any protest could be made, was off.

As is the way, other decorations added to the first three. A trip to northern France, on the small sector held by the combined French and Belgian forces, had netted him the British cross, and two Belgian crosses. In the courteous exchange of decorations by various allied governments, he reaped a rich harvest.

Of the end of the war he never thought. There was little possibility that he would escape death. Men as able as he were being brought down every day. But his luck was holding firm.

Late in 1917 he was summoned by his flight commander. A reporter for *L'Illustration* asked for an interview and a photograph.

"Nothing doing," he told the officer shortly. "You know I avoid that sort of thing, *mon Commandant.* It's a principle with me."

"You know, Zimmer, this excessive modesty borders on conceit? Your comrades submit to the ordeal, and you should. Moreover, you don't belong to yourself, but to the aviation. Your fame is also that of your comrades. I don't know if I am quite qualified to give you orders on that score, but I wish you would do as I suggest."

Chaptel hesitated.

"I cannot allow my picture to be printed," he declared. "I realize that my behavior seems queer. But I assure you, Major, it is best for me to remain in obscurity."

"What's at the back of all this, Zimmer?" the officer asked bruskly. "You evidently fear recognition. You've known me several months, I have seen you rise from adjutant to lieutenant, and you know that you have acquired my esteem. Something more than a youthful pecadillo is needed to change me. Don't allow your face to be published. But trust me. I'm not curious. I take you for what you are. But I'm sure that things are not as grave as they seem to you."

"They are, Major. First of all, my name is not Henri Zimmer."

"I suspected as much. Give me credit for a little intelligence. What's that dread secret of yours?"

"I'm an ex-convict. No, not even that, an *escaped* convict. I'm wanted in Cayenne."

"No more than here! I don't believe you stole."

"No, Major."

"Then you killed a man, for private reasons. You have, to my knowledge killed thirty-eight for France. The nation should forgive one killing in exchange for thirty-eight! The war has altered things. If you haven't earned a pardon I'll turn monk! I congratulate you in advance, Lieutenant——"

He hesitated.

"Edmond Chaptel. But I never achieved distinction as a criminal, Major."

He went on and explained his position.

The officer listened until he was through, then shrugged. "Something wrong with our laws," he said. "The chief culprit seems to be the government, which does not separate the accidental offender from the hardened criminal."

Chaptel smiled.

"Before the war, Major, if I had told you my story, what would you have said? If I were not decorated on every seam what would you think of me?"

"What I do now. You were a misguided kid, that's the story. You trot out, give the interview, pause for the photographer. I'm due for a leave tomorrow. I'll see men I know in Paris, will go as far as the president if need be, and I'll be back with a full pardon and rehabilitation papers before a week. Do you want to change your name?"

"No. It was good enough to protect me, I'll keep it while in the army. There's a private in the American Army who is glad that I bear that name. He claims me as a cousin. The name sticks."

THE major was as good as his word. He brought back the promised pardon. There had been little difficulty. The question of rehabilitating men who had fought for France had been discussed. A law would ultimately be passed by the Chambers to effect this automatically.

It was passed and is known as the Law of March 19, 1919.

The article concerning Lieutenant Zimmer, Ace of Spades, appeared in *L'Illustration.* Chaptel grinned when he saw his likeness and imagined the effect of Marietti, Bichet and Magre, should the magazine ever come into their hands, and provided the war had spared them.

The publicity had one unforeseen result, however. A staff machine drove into the yard, and Chaptel was summoned. It was Lespart, who had acquired the rank of major—and lost an arm.

Chaptel explained everything.

They talked of the prison camp. Lespart had not lost interest in the penal question. But the changing of rules and habit would be hard to perform. As long as men wished to defeat the well-intentioned measures of the higher officers, sergeants would become brutal, and *costauds* would flourish.

Chaptel, who was not altogether free from superstition, felt that his luck had been pushed too hard. And he was right. What his enemies could not do, a stupid accident managed to accomplish. Returning from a flight over the lines, a stay on his machine snapped, somehow strangled into the whirl of the propeller—and Chaptel broke both legs.

Followed months in the hospitals. His legs set slowly. There were longer months convalescing, moving about on crutches. But this had a compensation; it gave his parents a chance to exhibit him. Slowly but surely the rumor spread that he had been unjustly condemned to the *Bat'd' Af*, and that the president of the republic himself had apologized for the mistake.

At last he was permitted to resume service, not at the front, however, but in the aviation school at Pau. His request for action was accepted too late for him to return to the front. The armistice was signed.

He located Zimmer. The reunion was attended with much drinking and reminiscent joking. The Alsatian, however, was never quite at ease until the two doffed their coats in the seclusion of the hotel room, to smoke, drink beer and play cards. Even then, every few minutes, Zimmer would beam.

"Eh, my birth certificate, it brings you luck!"

Months later, Chaptel was in Paris. Leaving a dinner party early to take a train home, where he had been promised employment in a manufacturing plant, he was concious of being followed.

A nervousness he had not felt for years crept over him. Turning swiftly around a corner, he managed to catch a glimpse of his pursuer. Duval, there was no mistaking. His first action was undignified. He ran. The instinct had been too strong. People he jostled looked at him in surprize. He realized that he still wore a uniform. He should be through with craven actions by now.

He stopped and waited.

Duval wore a uniform, that of a corporal of infantry.

Duval saluted.

"I recognized you, *mon Lieutenant*, and I thought I'd say hello for old time's sake."

"How are you, Duval. What are you doing?"

"My term was up in Sixteen, and I was sent to the front with the battalion. I behaved myself, as you see. I'm a corporal already, and will be a sergeant soon. I'm only thirty-eight, and in fifteen years can be pensioned." Duval paused, embarrassed. "About what happened—back there—it was all a mistake. You weren't one of us. But I didn't know."

There was a silence. Neither man knew what to say next. Duval recovered first. Again, he saluted.

"Good-by, *mon Lieutenant!*"

Left alone, Chaptel walked rapidly. He must make that train. The position might not be open for long.

"Strange thing," he mused. "Duval turning honest and straight. But—I feel sorry for him. The other way he was more—more himself—more picturesque."

He could find no words to fit his sentiment. Was not a placid sergeant of infantry better than a Knave of Spades? And yet, Duval seemed like a lion in a cage.

"What about me?" Chaptel asked himself suddenly. "Do I fit in as a manager of a factory? Isn't it just as ridiculous for me to go back and live like a middle-aged man of leisure?"

He halted suddenly—the vision of long years of steady work, never moving from the narrow bounds of his native town. He stood still heedless of the crowd brushing by him. Then, swiftly, he made his decision, entered a café, sought a telephone.

A well-known voice answered.

"Hello, Major!" said Chaptel. "I've changed my mind. Still time to enter a plane in that Paris-Dakar flight? Yes—fine—yes, Major! Three days from now——"

INFERNAL INGENUITY

by Arthur Woodward

SOMEWHERE in the oozy mud of the Hudson River near the city of Yonkers, New York, lies the rotting wreckage of a small sloop. In that wreckage reposes the oaken remnants of the *Turtle*, the first submarine ever used by the United States in warfare against an invading enemy.

In the early autumn of 1776 when General Washington was laying plans for the defense of Manhattan Island against the combined land and sea forces of Lord Howe and his Hessian allies, David Bushnell, an inventive young genius of Saybrook, Connecticut, brought before Washington the plans for an underwater vessel to be used in the destruction of the English shipping in New York harbor.

This extraordinary machine, according to an account given in the journal of Dr. James Thacher, a surgeon in the Continental Army, was constructed of wood and "the external appearance of the torpedo bears some resemblance to two upper tortoise shells, of equal size placed in contact, leaving, at that part which represents the head of the animal, a flue or opening sufficiently capacious to contain the operator and to support him thirty minutes."

At the bottom, opposite the entrance, was a quantity of lead for ballast. The operator sat upright, using one oar for rowing either forward or backward, and was also provided with a rudder for steering his craft.

A valve in the floor compartment admitted water when the operator wished to descend, and it is related that the tiny ship could descend with ease to any depth and rise to the surface when the water was ejected through two brass force pumps. It was rendered perfectly water-tight throughout and was equipped with glass windows for the admission of light and with ventilators and air pipes to be used when the craft was running awash with the surface.

In the rear of the submarine, just over the rudder, was located the "torpedo," made of two pieces of oak timber hollowed out and filled with 150 pounds of powder with a clockwork attachment on the inside which was only released when the magazine was unscrewed by the operator. The clockwork was so arranged that it could be fired any time within twelve hours by the gun lock attachment connected with the explosive. A wooden screw for the purpose of fastening the infernal machine to the bottom or side of the target was also manipulated by the pilot, after he had drilled a hole with the augur carried for that special work.

The *Turtle* gave promise of revolutionizing naval warfare, and both General Washington and Major-General Israel Putnam, who was in charge of the defense preparations of the City at the time, were keenly interested in the curious invention.

When the vessel was finally completed and tested out, it was determined by General Putnam to put it into good use. The first vessel picked as the victim was the British flag-ship *Eagle*, a handsome man-of-war of sixty-four guns, then lying at anchor in the Inner Bay, not far from Governor's Island.

It so happened that Bushnell's brother, who had been instructed in the operation of the submarine, was taken suddenly sick. Sergeant Ezra Lee, afterwards made a Captain, of a Connecticut regiment, was hastily initiated into the mysteries of the mechanics of the craft. He embarked one night in October, 1776, with the powder magazine in place, ready to blow up the proud ship of the line.

Sergeant Lee submerged and reached the *Eagle* in safety. Unfortunately, in attempting to drill a hole in the wooden timbers near the rudder hinge, he struck an iron bar passing from the rudder hinge to the ship's quarter and was unable to attach the wooden screw. A movement of his hand six inches one way or the other would have crowned his efforts with success, but the sergeant, unused to maneuvering around under the keel of a British warship, lost all sense of direction and, in shifting the position of his craft, lost the British ship also.

After seeking her in vain, by groping at random under the water, he finally ascended to the surface some distance from the ship and, finding daylight well advanced, thought it imprudent to renew the attempt and set out for the shore. On passing Governor's Island, then occupied by the enemy, he feared he was discovered and, imagining that the torpedo retarded his progress, cast it off. It exploded one hour later, "throwing a vast column of water to an amazing height in the air, and leaving the enemy to conjecture whether the stupendous noise was produced by a bomb, a meteor, a waterspout or an earthquake."

Lack of resources put an end to further experimentation. The submarine, with a new torpedo, was loaded on a small sloop which for safety sake was anchored under the protection of the guns of Fort Washington.

Treachery on the part of deserters from the garrison in Fort Washington or the information of spies caused the British fleet, which had hitherto remained practically inactive during the construction of the obstruction across the Hudson River at Jeffry's Hook where the light house now stands, to get ready for sudden action.

Early on the morning of Wednesday, October 9th, not long after the unsuccessful attempt to blow up the *Eagle*, the British frigate *Phoenix* accompanied by the *Roebuck* a frigate of thirty-two guns, the *Tartar* of twenty guns, and three tenders stood up the river towards Fort Washington frightening the sloop bearing the submarine and another schooner laden with sugar and run into hasty flight.

The contest was unequal. The schooner was speedily captured while the sloop which had reached a point opposite Yonkers was sent to the bottom with a few well directed shots, where it probably lies to this day. Thus ended the first attempt at submarine warfare in North American waters.

ANOTHER ingenious use of an infernal machine in the early days occurred when the first flood of emigrants pushing westward over the Alleghanies, at the conclusion of the Revoluntionary War, spread out along the timbered creeks and lowlands of Kentucky and Ohio, the salt springs on Salt Creek, a tributary of the Scioto not far from Chillicothe, were deemed rare prizes.

Prior to the coming of the whites, the Indians frequented the "licks" and obtained their supply of salt from them. After the whites came, the Indians used the springs as points of ambush, and many a luckless settler lost his scalp or was carried into captivity when seeking the precious salt.

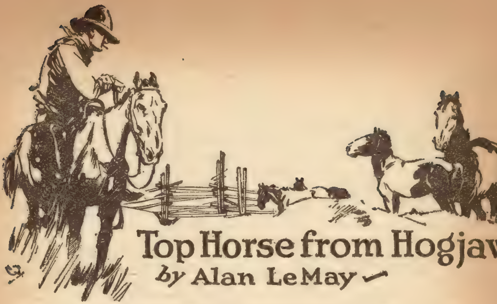
The old Scioto salt works were among the first worked by the whites in Ohio, having been known and recognized on maps since 1755. In the year 1798 wells were sunk to the depth of about thirty feet and the salt, obtained from the evaporation of the water, was taken from the kettles on packhorses to the various settlements and sold for three or four dollars per bushel. This practise was continued until as late as 1808. In fact, so important were these springs considered that, when Ohio was formed into a state in 1802, Congress enacted a measure setting aside a tract six miles square embracing the springs in order that the new state might benefit from the revenue thereof.

As might be expected, the regular workers of the salt works, when the lots along the creek were rented by the state to private owners, were a coarse, reckless set, on par with the charcoal burners and boatmen.

It was among this roystering crew that an expression originated which existed in Ohio until after 1846 namely: "To shoot one with a pack saddle." The saying came about in this manner.

A traveller having come on horseback for some distance to the Scioto salt works to purchase salt had his pack saddle stolen by the "boilers" and used in the furnace for fuel. Being outnumbered, and realizing that he could obtain no legitimate redress from such a crowd, he loaded his horse with salt and went his way, determining however not to be caught napping a second time.

Not long afterward he again had occasion to make the journey to the works, and on making camp threw his pack saddle carelessly to one side and prepared to pass the night. When the boilers thought he was asleep, they again stole his saddle and threw it into the furnace. It had been there but a short time when a terrific explosion ensued and furnace, boilers and all appliances were hurtled in every direction. The saddle had been carefully loaded with gunpowder. Needless to say, the salt purchaser never lost another pack saddle at that camp.



Top Horse from Hogjaw

by Alan LeMay

Author of "Mustang Breed," "The Three Missing Men," etc.

"WHISKERS" Beck very deliberately turned where he sat and subjected Bob Crowe of the J Z to a curious stare. Then he snickered faintly and turned away.

"Now just what the ——," demanded Bob Crowe testily, "do you mean by that?"

In the flickering firelight Bob seemed to consist chiefly of a tall pair of angular propped-up knees.

Whiskers lit a crooked cigaret, flicked a spark out of his brushy white beard and grinned. A young puncher, strange to the country, might have seen trouble ahead. But Whiskers had ridden for the neighboring Triangle R for ten years, and knew exactly which end of his rope the hondo was in.

"Belt may be a good cow hoss," he conceded. "Ain't sayin' he ain't. But when yuh cracks out that he's two jumps an' a long spit ahead of anything in the country, I guess yuh ain't includin' my hoss Brandy!"

Whiskers looked around at the twenty-odd riders who lounged about the tiny fire in the starlight. He was a long way from home. Old Man Rutherford, owner of the Triangle R, had decided to represent himself at the fall round-up of the J Z, and Whiskers was accompanying him. But the ancient cowboy knew that he was still among friends.

"Brandy," he went on, "ain't limited to the brains o' the man what taught him, namely me. He picked up his own eddication where I left it off, an' carried it on hisself to where it's complete!"

"Mebbe so," Bob Crowe answered. "But Belt, he was born a cut-horse. Teachin' him the ways o' the critters is just like showin' a gopher how to get hisself into a hole."

"Lemme tell yuh somethin' Brandy done," said Whiskers. "I had Brandy punch a wet cow out o' the main herd an' over to the cuttin' grounds. But the cow an' calf had some way got pried loose, one from t'other, in the main herd. Anyways, when we gets to the cut, the calf ain't there. Ridin' back into the herd, Brandy starts workin' sudden without no sign from me. I sits quiet to find out what's his idee. Well, sir, —— if he ain't smelled out that li'l bawlin' calf an' is cuttin' her out to take back to her maw!"

"That ain't nothin'. Here's a sample o' Belt's regular work," said Bob Crowe. "I rides into the main herd with Belt an' picks a critter for the cut. Somethin' is funny about the way he's workin'. Real contrary, not mindin' what I say more'n half the time. We gets to the edge o' the herd, an' I finds that Belt has cut out the critter I picked all right, an' two more, three to oncet, an' all three J Zs!"

There was a moment's silence. Then—

"First liar ain't got no chance," said a voice in the background.

"Listen to what my horse Spare-Ribs done," spoke up "Heavy" Landor, from the Sawbuck outfit.

He was a merry fat man, not too tall, with a short, child-like face and a perpetual twinkle in his eye.

"I'm ridin' through the herd when I falls off. See? I falls off. O' course, right there I has a chance to get trompled on 'cause when I falls off I gets knocked inconscious."

"More so than usual?" asked a voice from the shadows.

"Yeah," said Heavy, "but not so much as you. So what does Spare-Ribs do but turn around an' pick me up by the seat o' the pants with his teeth, an' rush me right out o' the herd!"

"Shut up, Heavy," ordered Whiskers. "Me an' Bob is tryin' to do some serious lyin'. Now my hoss Brandy once——"

"Shucks," said Bob Crowe, "yuh see? That just goes to show that if a man ain't seen Belt he ain't seen a cow horse. If I mention the least little thing Belt does, it's a sign for all an' sundry to break out with the tallest lies they can think up."

"Prob'ly," Whiskers admitted, "you was real lucky to get Belt cut to your string. But——"

"String nothin'!" Bob Crowe protested. "Belt's my own horse what I won in a poker game at Hogjaw. Represented ten hunderd dollars in the pot, Belt did. An' wasn't throwed in till his owner was cleaned stripped down to a whistle an' a brag!"

"That explains it," Whiskers pointed out. "Any man has a right to 'pologize for the hoss he atcherly owns."

"You own Brandy?" Bob suggested.

"Nope. Brandy's just a ordinary hoss in a string. But he's had trainin'."

"You make me tired," said Bob Crowe frankly. "I suppose you ain't got Brandy along. O' course not. The best horse is always the one that's somewheres else. But I'm sayin' that if he was here, why I'd bet my socks an' boots——"

"Brandy's here," said Whiskers. "In person."

Bob Crowe considered for a long moment.

"We start cutting tomorrow," he said. "I'll just put up Belt against Brandy in the regular work, leave anybody judge, an' betcha fifty dollars!"

Whiskers grinned. "Hate to take your money, Bob. 'Taint right."

"You're scairt!"

A chuckle whispered among the lounging punchers, discreetly suppressed, but evident. Whiskers' eyes twinkled. He shifted from his elbow to a sitting position, causing his bald head to shine in the little flicker of firelight.

"Yes?" said he. "Well, I'll jest raise yuh a hunderd!"

Then, as Bob Crowe hesitated, and bit his sandy moustache, "Hate to make yuh ride all winter in the cold, Bob. Gets into yore summer's pay pretty heavy, does it?"

"Nope. I ain't figurin' to lose. I was jest wonderin' how fer I could raise without shovin' yuh off the table!"

"Might try."

"I got a quarter section o' land down Tunka way," said Bob. "Wasn't worth nothin' until they started to irrigate. Ought to be worth severeal thousand by now. I raise yuh that against what have yuh?"

"Dunno what yore land's worth," said Whiskers, "but seein's I can't lose, it's all jest velvet to me. I got eighty head, mebbe more, runnin' on the Triangle R range. Good mixed stock. I'll put up them."

"They'll do," agreed Bob. "You just callin'?"

"Nossir! I'm raisin'!"

By this time other figures about the fire were beginning to sit up and take notice.

"I'm perpared to surprize yuh. I got more'n four hundred actchal dollars in the bank at Spring River. I confronts yuh with them!"

"Leave me ask one thing," said Heavy Landor, "so's I'll know whether to turn in or not yet. How much o' this foolishness goes an' how much is wind?"

"All goes," grunted Bob. "I'm ser'ous. That right Whiskers?"

Whiskers nodded.

"Mister," Bob went on, shoving back his big hat to scratch his head, "that sure was a potent raise. Hardly know what to match yuh with. Might put in my saddle for two hunderd. Nope. I puts up Belt an' calls it a raise o' six hunderd!"

"Whoopee! Cowboy, yuh sure do value that hoss when speakin' in terms of other people's money. Won't do, nossir!"

"What's the reason it won't do?"

"Cause I can buy me assorted broomtails, all sizes, at anywhere from four bits to three blankets," said Whiskers.

"Cowhorses like Belt? No sirree! Money won't buy 'em!"

"I'm laughin'," said Whiskers. "But then mebbe I took advantage on yuh in that last raise. I tell yuh. I'll make yuh a proposition jest so's you can suck along to the show-down. You put up Belt, an' I'll admit I'm called. Called but not raised, how's that!"

"All right. I ain't one to dicker over a sure thing."

"Seems like we oughta have jedges," said Whiskers. "Jest to avoid argyment and misonderstandin'."

"You pick one an' I'll pick one an' we'll agree on one, assumin' such a thing can be did," said Bob Crowe.

"I picks the Old Man," Whiskers said.

"Kelleher?" asked Bob in surprize. "Bein' J Z boss, looks like he knows."

"Rutherford," said Whiskers. "Guess you forget that my Old Man is representin' the Triangle R his own self at this J Z works."

"No," boomed a big voice from the other side of the fire. "I can't do it. I got a side bet up!"

"Wad Peters, then, from the B 5."

"Gosh," was Peter's only comment.

"I pick Kelleher hisself," said Bob. "Who yuh want for third man?"

"Heavy Landor," said Whiskers. "Him an' me was in a shootin' scrape on two opposite sides. Consekently, he'll gimme square deal, for fear it won't look right!"

Heavy Landor laughed merrily.

"You sure don't hold a grudge, much!"

"Neither d' you," Whiskers added.

"I'm plumb amazed," Bob Crowe stated. "But it suits me!"

WHISKERS, always a handy man when there was eating to be done, finished breakfast early. He had saddled Brandy and was already astride when Bob Crowe walked out to the edge of the remuda. By daylight Bob Crowe was a lean, horse-faced man whose sense of humor was concealed by a permanently sorrowful expression and a dejected mustache.

After some moments Bob Crowe emerged from the remuda leading an unprepossessing-looking pony of a dusty, dun color. About all that could be said for Belt's build was that he was close-knit. He was stocky, bumpy of knee and short of pastern; his neck was inclined to the ewe pattern, and he carried his head straight forward on a dead level. The only promise to be found in his appearance was in a certain brightness of eye, which may mean several things or nothing at all.

Enthusiastic J Z punchers whose eyes ran from Belt to Brandy and back again, admitted that a comparison of looks left Belt looking pretty ratty. Brandy, a big, brock-faced chestnut, of rich, bright color, stood arch-necked and alert. He had bucked a few rods at first mounting, with Whiskers making fun of him the while; and now pawed and danced as the old cowboy tried to hold him in one place.

Brandy happened to be still for a few moments as Belt was led out. And during those moments Whiskers sat like a statue, staring at Bob Crowe's horse. Then he silently wheeled Brandy and, riding to where Old Man Rutherford was saddling, he dismounted and walked close to the boss of the Triangle R.

"Big boy," he said, "did you put a bet on Brandy?"

"I sure did," said the Old Man.

"Was it much?"

Rutherford grinned and spat.

"Much? You know that spring we call the Lobo Hole, where I want to build a camp?"

"The one you an' Hack Berringer is figgerin' to lawsuit about?"

"Yep. Hack Berringer claims it for his Sawbuck outfit. I say it's mine. Well, sir, I just bet Hack Berringer all rights on the Lobo Hole, on your horse, that's all!"

Whiskers looked sick.

"You seen Bob's Belt hoss?"

"Nope."

"Take a look!"

Rutherford looked a good long look. Then the men looked at each other.

"What'll we do?" asked Whiskers.

"Do? Ain't nothin' to do. We bet didn't we?"

Rutherford shrugged.

" 'Cept you get in there an' ride, cowboy! You ride an' we'll beat him yet! Brandy's no slouch, hisself, Whiskers."

"All an' sundry know that he ain't!" said Whiskers, turning away.

"Yuh look scairt, Whiskers!" sung out a grinning cowboy as he cinched.

"Mighty fine lookin' hoss, that Belt," said Whiskers. "Guess I'll have to sit in the saddle after all. Course, I was jest goin' to send Brandy into the herd by hisself."

"Better had, Whiskers. You're gettin' too old to be climbin' on horses!"

"Yep, pretty old," Whiskers agreed good-naturedly. "Wouldn't b'lieve, to look at me, that I'll be only ninety-seven come Christmas, now would yuh?"

Rutherford walked over to Joe Kelleher, boss of the J Z.

"Joey," he said, "was this bet the boys made put in writin'?"

"Sure was, Ben. No argyments for me, not while I'm in the embarrassin' position o' judge!"

"Leave me see."

Joe Kelleher unbuttoned the pocket of a tawny shirt that had once been orange, and dug out a crumpled piece of paper, torn from the back of the tally book. He handed it to Rutherford.

This odd document, when deciphered, read as follows:

> TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:
>
> I bets that a horse eddicated by me can beat any cowhorse eddicated elsewhere, in all round work, speed on the straightaway barred. Or anyways, that Bob Crowe can not prove different this round up.
>
> G. Halford Beck, namely Whiskers.
>
> I bets that such is not by no means the case.
>
> Robt. Crowe.
>
> P. S. We both agree that what the judges says goes without argument.

"It sure took a pile o' hagglin' to perduce that same," said Joe Kelleher. "Look all right to you?"

"Yep." Old Man Rutherford ran a big hand over his craggy face and gazed for a moment at the irregular horizon. "Well," he concluded as he turned away, "we'll see what time'll deal out!"

SOME hours later Joe Kelleher sat his horse somewhat apart from the herd, watching operations with a clouded brow. Beneath a blazing, cloudless sky, a vast puddle of cattle milled with a ceaseless revolving, shuffling movement, held in by the circle riders. Repeatedly a lone critter, bellowing with wrath and hurt feelings, bolted out of the herd, hazed by a close-ridden horse; tried to head back and was finally delivered at one of the smaller puddles that were the cuts.

When chance arose Joe Kelleher called Heavy Landor and Wad Peters to him.

"What time is it, Heavy?"

Heavy drew out a nickel-plated watch. "Five minutes of."

"Of what?"

The hefty puncher shot a calculating glance at the sun.

"Well, I sh'd say eleven."

"But what does the watch say?" demanded Kelleher.

"It don't. Hour hand busted off two years back. Tells how close it is, but don't say to what."

"Well, 't any rate, it's gettin' on toward noon. Bob an' Whiskers will straddle fresh horses, an' 'fore then we've got to figure out who wins this —— fool cow horse contest. An' right now I want to say I wisht I was in no way connected with it!"

"Me too!" said Heavy.

"Gosh," remarked Wad Peters contemplatively.

"Powerful lot o' bettin' 'mongst the boys. My own cook has let out more'n six hundred dollars in bettin' on Brandy, he bein' contrary an' always likin' to run down the outfit he's with. Guess he must o' win a crap game before he come here. Near all the boys has a slice."

"Tom Badgery an' Slick Henning, with me, is sunk on Brandy, too," said Wad Peters. "Clean down to their saddles an' irons."

"An' Newt Wattrous, o' my outfit, he's on Brandy. And your man Blackie Bender, what used to be a faro dealer. Oh, your J Z rannies found some takers, Mister Kelleher!"

"There's goin' to be a heap o' argyment if our decision is the least bit over-ripe," said Kelleher. "Which do yuh like?"

The punchers looked blank.

"Which has cut out the most cows?" asked Heavy.

Kelleher shook his head.

"That don't signify. Seems like Bob is a few ahead. But Whiskers has been handlin' some terrible snaky stock. One of 'em was the king of the rattlesnakes for sure. All the boys stopped work to watch an' holler!"

"Don't think Belt hasn't been doin' some pretty work, nuther," said Wad Peters. "I never in my life see two such ponies in one remuda. Belt goes at it like each critter was his last chance at somethin' to eat. Look now! Boy! Didja see him take a steak off that blue steer with his teeth!"

"Brandy ain't exactly nailed to one place," Heavy offered. "He can step around some too. Puts me in mind of a spider on a stove!"

"Beautiful horse, Brandy," said Kelleher. "A real pitcher."

"Didja notice Bob holdin' his hands over his head on that last one? —— if that horse needs a bridle a-tall."

"Shucks. Whiskers has had his reins tied to the horn for a hour. Those boys start 'em with their legs an' the horse does the rest."

"That Brandy has a powerful lot of bottom," said Heavy. "Dancin' all the way."

"An' Belt is just one chunk o' tough leather, an' gamer than a buck flea on wash day," said Kelleher. "Boys, I'm worried."

"I can't offer no decision. Mebbe we should call it a draw," said Wad Peters.

"Leave me an' Mr. Kelleher get about four miles start—then you announce it," said Heavy Landor pityingly. "I'll take a chance with one faction against me, but there ain't no percentage in havin' 'em all land on yuh at once!"

"I s'pose if worse comes to more so, we can make 'em ride again this afternoon," said Kelleher. "Though 'tain't hardly right."

"Whiskers would quit cold, 'fore he'd risk spoilin' that chestnut," Wad Peters opined.

"I got it!" yelped Heavy. "I sees a way whereby we'll get out o' this alive an' happy!"

"For ——'s sake, how?" demanded Kelleher.

"Take both boys into the middle o' the herd. Post a rider at north an' south for markers. Then make 'em each try for the same steer, one to cut him to the east, the other to the west!"

"Bust me for a wool-duster," said Kelleher, "if I don't think he has it!"

"One side o' the herd may be closer set," objected Peters. "An' who's to say which is the middle?"

"Leave Bob post the markers an' pick the middle," said Heavy, "then give Whiskers choice o' sides."

"I guess that does it," Wad Peters admitted.

"Boy, you got a head that would crack an ax," declared Kelleher, "an' I'm for yuh! You agreeable, Wad?"

"Let 'er rip!"

BOB CROWE welcomed the idea with enthusiasm, and Whiskers, though looking a little dubious, agreed to make the test.

Riders to act as markers were posted to the north and south of the herd. It was agreed that fifty yards outside of the nearest three cattle at the edge of the herd would be the point at which the critter would be considered cut. Within that distance the losing rider might still attempt to turn the animal back. In case of doubt as to which side the contested animal was brought out on, the direction in which the animal passed beyond the markers was to decide.

Kelleher rode into the herd with Bob and Whiskers, and the former picked the center.

"That red steer," said he.

"I'll cut to the west," said Whiskers instantly.

Kelleher rode between them until he could touch their shoulders with his outspread arms. Then, "Take 'im away!" And the ponies leaped to their work.

The judges had anticipated a careful play of skill and luck, probably lasting many minutes. To Kelleher's bewilderment, the contest was over almost before it was begun.

Two ponies descended upon the astonished red steer like twin whirlwinds; a snapping rope end made the hair fly on his rump, and he dodged bellowing into the thick of the herd.

Twisting and turning among scrambling mixed stock, the steer and his hazers bolted south through the cattle. A temporary advantage in the shifting of the cattle put Bob and Belt a little in the lead, and the steer bent to the east.

Whiskers and Brandy were clear again. "Now, boy!" yelled Whiskers.

Suddenly Brandy stopped short, so unexpectedly that Whiskers bent almost double over the horse's withers. At that moment a squalling calf plunged distractedly in front of Belt, and horse and rider went down. Belt was up almost instantly, with Bob in the saddle, but they were out of it. Then—

Astonished punchers heard Whiskers yell

at his horse, saw him snatch at the reins which he had disdained to untie from the horn. Brandy had perceived a momentary opening in the herd, flashed around the hindquarters of the fleeing steer to the opposite side and turned the animal, not west, but east!

Whiskers spurred Brandy forward, endeavoring to make the turn complete, thus heading the steer to the west. The red critter dodged, and cattle surged in between. The contested animal had neared the east border of the herd. Belt was shouldering his way, twisting and turning, through the cattle. The steer tried to turn back, but Belt seemed to be on both sides of him at once.

Then Belt stretched out a lean, straining neck, and punished the steer's rump with a shearing snap. The next moment that steer was out of the herd, out of the herd, unmistakably to the east.

Whiskers rode slowly into the open and toward the remuda.

"'Tain't yore fault," he muttered, "I taught yuh that, to work with the other hoss, an' not agin' him!"

A long rumble of indecent expressions, peculiarly original and vivid, smoked their way out of Whiskers' beard.

THE cook's horn had blown. A dozen laughing, jubilant punchers, and a few dejected ones, had unsaddled, and were drawing their chuck. Whiskers sat well off to one side, staring at the crowd without seeing it, apparently in deep thought. No one ragged him.

"Wait now," protested Blackie Bender to the six or seven punchers who clamored about him for their winnings. "Wait up! Judge's decision ain't come in yet! No, I don't care how you seen it, Billy, m' boy."

Eyes now sought the three judges, and found them in conference with Old Man Rutherford three rods away. The Old Man of the Triangle R was arguing a point quietly but intensely; and Heavy Landor, at least, was beginning to look alarmed.

"Here now!" yelled Hack Berringer. "Influencin' the judges don't go! You leave the arguin' to them, Rutherford!"

At this interruption the three men and Rutherford, still talking in undertones, began to stroll toward the main group. The eyes of the judges thoughtfully studied the ground, their hands sought pockets. Heavy Landor asked a question, and Joe Kelleher pulled out the crumpled paper from his shirt pocket and showed it to him. Heavy nodded ruefully.

"Well," said the boss of the J Z aloud, "we may as well have it over with now!"

He took back the paper from Heavy and strode forward.

The cook stopped dishing out grub. All waited, some standing near the cook, others seated cross-legged a little apart, pans of chuck in their laps.

"Boys," said Kelleher, "I guess most of yuh know me. I guess you'll all admit that I stand for square deals. An' in the first place I don't want no rowin' nor bother in no shape over this decision. A —— peculiar thing has come up that no one in no way looked for. Whiskers, and Mr. Rutherford, too, says that if they'd had any idea of it they wouldn't in no case have left this contest go on. An' I personally knows both o' them to be square."

Not a puncher moved. Both factions stared in noncommital suspense.

"Speakin' for the judges, we can't do this, or don't want to unless both contestants is willin'. But in case both contestants is agreeable, we're ready an' willin' to call this no contest, or a draw!"

"Speakin' for Whiskers," Rutherford spoke up instantly, "he's agreeable!"

"Well, I ain't!" Bob Crowe flashed. "An' I think that's a —— of a way to do things! If that was a draw I'm a Indian!"

A scattering rumble of support came from the punchers who had put their money on Belt.

"Everybody notice, anyway, what Whiskers an' me offered to do," growled Rutherford. "Yuh asked for it, now yuh get it! Go on, Joey!"

"The bet reads like this," said Kelleher, holding up the wrinkled sheet from the tally book. "Signed by both contestants."

He read slowly:

"To whom it may concern. I bets that a horse eddicated by me can beat any horse eddicated elsewhere in all round work, speed on the straightaway barred. Or anyways, that Bob Crowe can not prove different this round-up. Signed, G. Halford Beck, namely Whiskers. I bets that such ain't the case. Robert Crowe."

"Well, I done it with Belt," said Bob.

"Accordin' to the way this bet reads,"

said Kelleher weightily, "the decision goes to Whiskers!"

There was a moment of open-mouthed silence, then Kelleher hurried on.

"Rutherford I know don't lie. He says Belt was bred an' born on the Triangle R range, out of a mare o' his named Silver. He sold the foal to Whiskers, who named him Bullet, an' broke him, trained him and rode him for six years, up until last winter, when he lost him in a poker game at Hogjaw, which same game was the reason Whiskers did winter ridin' last winter for the first time in twenty years.

"Therefore, Whiskers wins, both horses bein' eddicated by him in the first place!"

Another long moment of silence, then pandemonium broke loose. A dozen arguments were going at once. Blackie Bender's right hand snatched at his gun. Two old hands dropped to their hands and knees to be out of the line of fire, just as Heavy Landor grabbed Blackie's arm from behind. A general brawl looked to be the order of the day.

"Shut up!" bellowed Kelleher, firing his forty-five into the ground. "I'll kill the —— that opens his trap! You, Charley, Hank, Smoky!"

Again a silence, a most desirable one, prevailed.

"This will be reasoned out by the contestants and the judges," continued Rutherford, "an' all bets will go as they decide. Now what yuh got to say, Bob?"

"I say all bets are off but mine," said Bob. "I stick. Otherwise, no contest!"

"Whiskers accepts that," said Rutherford.

"Anybody else that wants to carry on their bets can make special arrangements between theirselves, but all previous bets is off, accordin' to me."

"That goes with the judges," said Kelleher. "An' the man that gets insultin' about this has got me on his neck to start with."

"As for me," Bob went on, "I don't back down on my bets with no man. All I asks for is proof. I bragged, an' I'll back my brags. But I think in a case like this it ain't right to ask any man just to go on somebody's say so, without no other proof, no matter who the feller is!"

"I check that!" said Hack Berringer. "I never welched on a fair bet yet. The judges' final decision holds with me, but I gotta see proof!"

"Then our bet stands?" asked Rutherford.

"Yep! I asks no odds anywhere," said Hack.

"That fair from Whiskers' lookout?" Joe Kelleher asked Old Man Rutherford.

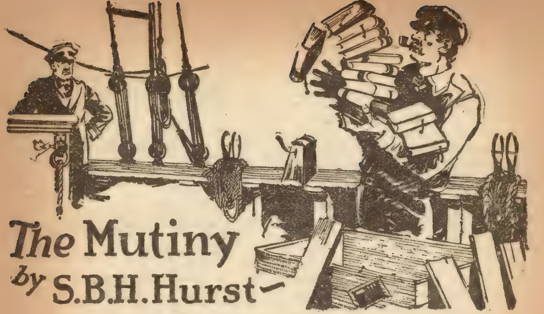
"Check," said Rutherford.

"Well, looks like your move, Ben," Joe said.

Rutherford scratched his head. Several times he opened his mouth and shut it again. His eyes swept the distance contemplatively. Then suddenly they came to rest on something behind the others, and he grinned.

"Look yonder," he said. "There's all the proof yuh should want!"

They looked, and witnessed a rare phenomenon of the range. A little distance apart sat Whiskers, hands locked about his knees, hat down over his eyes, head bowed in thought. A horse, strayed from the remuda, was coming up behind him with nose outstretched. As they watched, the horse softly nudged Whiskers' neck with his nose. It was Belt!



The Mutiny

by S.B.H. Hurst

Author of "The Confirmation of Peter," "Erased," etc.

IT WAS during the afternoon of a bleak March day in 1891, in the cabin of the *Kenyon*, as she lay in dock loading patent fuel for the west coast, that Captain Parrot, known on all the seas as "Hard Case Pol," first investigated religion with the assistance of an expert.

From the standpoint of morals the captain needed no teacher, self-control having been his fetish all his life. He had never taken a drink or uttered an oath, and his sixty years were as spotless as a decent boy's. Which was unusual. As unusual as his ability to make a crew quiver with that bull voice of his while saying words which might have been said anywhere. Captains are not known as hard cases because of gentleness.

A typical old shell-back, with all the old shell's courage and ignorance, his beliefs embraced a mass of weird and most intimate superstitions. While behind these was the notion that God captained the universe much as Pol captained a ship, standing for stern devotion to duty and punishing weakness.

Standing on the poop, Parrot had been casually calling some man on the main royal yard a spineless son of a barnacle—which was his limit of bad language—when he had chanced to observe one of those generally kindly preachers who conduct bethels for sailors on the dock-side. Thus, on this blustery afternoon, Hard Case Pol had invited that one into his cabin. The main result, at first, was the purchase of a case containing three dozen Bibles and the captain's promise to do what he could to spread the Word. The promise worried him because he kept his promises and he could see no possible way of keeping this one. The possession of the Bibles worried him still more because of the intimate superstitions aforementioned. For Captain Parrot knew only too well that the Bible was a great book, but not a book for the profane or the ignorant.

He was not profane himself, but all his acquaintances were, and his next crew would be just as bad as the last. The ancient marine belief held that the Bible must not be touched by evil hands; that if anything were laid upon the Bible or if a leaf of it were torn, the person responsible would be damned eternally. This may have been the reason why one never found a Bible in the forecastle of one of those old-time sailing ships, or in the cabin either!

So Captain Parrot worked his ship out of the Bristol Channel, his mind disturbed by the preacher's advice to tone down his superstitions and his imagination trying to puzzle out how he could ever do it, while his promise to that excellent man now seemed like a good-natured lie. And Pol never told a lie, lying being weakness.

The presence of all those Bibles on board was an added source of worriment. The captain had never heard of a ship going to sea with Bibles on board, and here he was with thirty-six of them. If the crew had been religious it would have been different. But thirty-six Bibles aboard a ship with a crew still mostly drunk, who were being chased around by a mate and second mate whose language was simply terrible—why, surely this would mean bad luck and a long passage. The old superstition would not die. It would be useless to tell the mates to quit profanity. In the first place, the habit was too well established—they could not quit; and in the second, mates who had had the habit so long, could not be expected to get the limit of work out of sailors unless they swore at them And Captain Parrot recognized it as his duty to his owners to get all the work out of the men that was possible. That was what they were paid for.

So, long before they passed Lundy, Hard Case Pol was facing one of the most difficult problems of his life. His disposal of the Bibles, too, was a matter of which he felt ashamed. The case was not marked, and to the questioning steward, Parrot had said, "Oh, put it down in the lazarette with the other stores," feeling, when he said it, horribly like one who hides her head under the bedclothes to escape the lightning.

The weather was fine and the wind fair, but such was Hard Case Pol's distress that he would almost have welcomed bad weather, because a head wind and a gale would have given him something else to think about.

A week passed, the weather still fine and the wind still fair. If it had not been for his promise to the kindly preacher, Parrot might have forgotten the Bibles. For either the old superstition was wrong or else —surely, it could not be possible that he had a religious crew aboard. A moment's consideration convinced him otherwise.

Then the blow fell. The steward, sorting stores, dropped the case and discovered its contents. He had been well brought up, had that steward, and was naturally offended to find thirty-six Bibles all mixed up with peas for soup, pantiles for bread and ancient horses destined for the harness cask, so he carried them up to the captain's cabin.

"I thought the lazarette was no nice place for Bibles, sir," he explained virtuously.

"No more it is, steward."

Hard Case Pol suddenly saw a wonderful way of redeeming his promise to the bethel minister as well as of asserting his dominance in a new and delightful manner. And the scheme that came to him also provided a safe course for avoiding the danger of sailing too closely to the Bible superstition.

"Leave them here, steward. I'll attend to it."

THE steward left the cabin, and the captain, well pleased with himself, contemplated the further beauties of his plan. Yes, he would avoid getting caught aback on the Bibles while still keeping his promise. It would never do to indiscriminately issue Bibles to such a crew as inhabited the forecastle of the *Kenyon*. Neither would it be safe to supply the mates, carpenter, sailmaker, cook or steward with them. For sooner or later some careless marlin-spike of a fingered ruffian would tear a leaf or something.

The inevitable bad luck would ensue and then some poor innocent wretch would be blamed. A regular witch hunt would take place for the jonah, with the wrong man suffering. Had Parrot not seen a man almost keel-hauled because he was suspected of being a jonah? He had. Just like the superstition of witchcraft. He would avoid such trouble. Trouble interfered with the work. Captain Parrot would read the Bible to the men himself every Sunday between noon and one o'clock. This would do the men good, and no work would be interfered with since it would be the watch below of one watch, and on Sunday afternoon only needed work was done anyway. But first, being thorough, he would study the Bible himself.

At once he began to apply his mind to absorbing the Old Testament. And since by sheer force of character he had made his own life and moulded the lives of others, the ideas he gained were tinged largely by his reactions to what he read. He read with care. He found parts which entranced him, and he had not gone very far, maybe skipping a chapter occasionally, before he found himself becoming a hero-worshipper for the first time in his life, and enjoying the sensation.

Moses, that gallant old fighter for liberty, was the hero. Parrot simply idolized the leader of the children of Israel. Particularly did he enjoy the part Moses played in regard to Pharo. Those plagues of Egypt! And what a first mate Moses would have made! Hard Case Pol positively smacked his lips when he thought of this. He had good enough mates as mates went, but fancy having a man like Moses! A picture of Moses chasing the crew of the *Kenyon* around the deck, always holding over them the possibility of one of the plagues, entranced Captain Parrot.

He spent some of the happiest moments of his life contemplating the effect of this uncomfortable threat on some of his men. All of them, in fact, for like all old captains, Parrot firmly believed that to allow sailors to be comfortable was to ruin them. Yes, a man like Moses, even one who was not a perfect likeness, would have been worth double wages. And Hard Case Pol did not believe in high wages. The more wages paid the more whisky drunk, was his idea. Money was, therefore, wasted on sailors. But a mate like Moses!

So the captain told the mate to rig church next Sunday. He spoke as evenly and naturally as if he had been giving an ordinary order, showing nothing of the effort it cost to be natural. For sincere as Parrot was, it was not easy to tell such a man to prepare a church. The mate, struggling between surprise and horror, could only gasp.

"Church, sir?"

"Yes, Mister."

"Where?" asked the stunned mate.

"On the poop. Where did you think?" said Pol acidly.

The mate grinned with much lack of tact.

"Where's the psalm-slinger, sir?" he queried.

"Mister Marshall," replied Parrot severely, holding his temper because of what he was going to say and his belief that religious teachers always kept their feelings under control. "Mister Marshall, I'll thank you not to use either vulgar or disreverent remarks about preachers of the Gospel. Don't call them any sort of slingers. As to your question, I will lead the service. You get the church rigged."

"Very well, sir."

And the mate went away, feeling anæsthetized.

Now no mate curries favor with his men. He, it is, who must bear the men's ill feeling and be prepared to hit hard if the ill-feeling becomes too apparent, even when he knows the men are blaming him for some needless, driving work which the captain has originated. Nevertheless, this excellent Mister Marshall went away, contemplating breaking the awful news with some gentleness *via* the carpenter-sailmaker route. And he also thought of letting it be known that he, Marshall, was not responsible for the extraordinary order.

But before it came to him that no man would ever suspect him of religious endeavour, his sense of discipline and duty banished the weak notion. The order would be given naturally, as Parrot had given it. Besides, if he let the men know how he felt they might become contrary and imagine that they possessed souls or something that needed saving. Whereas Mister Marshall knew quite well that they didn't.

Then further thinking led him not to anticipate trouble, but joy—much joy when the unhappy sailors were ushered into church and compelled to listen to their captain's teaching. For Pol was distinctly an amateur at this sort of thing.

Marshall visioned the faces, the entire scene with delight. Because they would not know what was going to happen. They would rig church, feeling bewildered, no doubt, but not one of them would know what was being done. None of them knew what the inside of a church looked like. Neither did the second mate and least of all him. No, what the mate's intended and elaborate preparations portended would be a mystery to the men who would do the preparing under his orders. The captain had just told him to rig church, given him a free hand. That his own ideas regarding the inside of a church were entirely theoretical, mattered not. Marshall would rig church as he considered churches should be rigged. The men would never guess what was going on!

IT WAS a fine Sunday with the *Kenyon* doing nicely, close-hauled on the starboard tack. The sea was a confused delight of agitated diamonds under a sun which was a spirit of radiance. During the forenoon watch

Mister Marshall proceeded with his ecclesiastical preparations. Parrot never interfered with an officer when the officer was doing his best unless the safety of the ship demanded interference. But there were moments during that church rigging when he was called upon to exercise some restraint. For the mate was doing his work lavishly, even rising in architectural moments to what he called a pulpit, the while loudly chasing his puzzled watch.

But when Pol took the sun at noon, his restraint broke down. He was not accustomed to taking a meridian altitude from the interior of a church. Parrot fussed with his sextant, trying to get the best side of the ship for the observation, but it was too much of a sort of obstacle race. He boiled, then called.

"Mister Marshall, what does all this mean?"

"You told me to rig church, sir," answered the mate with fine innocence.

"Mister Marshall, I am not calling you names, but please remember that the person who even in fun, mocks religion, is not wise but very much the reverse. Unrig the church. I've been thinking it over. You take away all the gear you have put on the poop and just leave a camp stool for me near the wheel. The rest can stand. It ain't right, anyhow, for the men to sit in the presence of their captain."

And Captain Parrot walked away, leaving the mate strangely ashamed of his fooling. Parrot's sincerity might have crude moments but it was soul-touching.

Forgetting hunger in expectancy, the crew gathered. Pol cowed them with a look, forgetting that ministers do not open the service with hardcase manifestations. The mate had annoyed him, but he was not nervous.

Settling himself, the captain glanced up at the leach of the main royal. As the *Kenyon* was sailing by the wind, it was the duty of the man at the wheel to keep the leach lifting. As this was duly taking place Parrot opened the Bible.

"Men, I am going to read a chapter to you. Most of you know what the Bible is, but, for those that don't, I'll say it's the greatest book on earth. All religions are built on it, just as all ships are built on keels. Now listen, because I don't want to have to get angry with any of you. I'll read about one of the greatest men that ever lived. His name was Moses. And I hope it will do you good, because I ain't in the habit of wasting my time trying to do good to the likes of you."

He paused, and the men who had been in theaters if not in churches, trying to do what they believed to be the correct thing in spite of their feelings, began to applaud. Again Parrot cowed them, and then he plunged with gusto into the plagues of Egypt.

Naturally and dutifully, the man at the wheel was interested. Besides, like the majority of the congregation, he had some trouble in preventing his face from expressing his feelings, and as he dreaded the result of giving vent to them, his steering became somewhat erratic.

"And Moses said unto Pharo——"

The captain looked up at the main royal. Instead of the leach shaking, the sail was ramping full. He swallowed hard, but realizing that it would never do to speak his mind in the middle of the plagues, he went on reading. But the old Adam was giving him more trouble than even Pharo gave Moses.

"And Moses said to Pharo——"

Again he looked aloft. The sail was away full. Parrot, the captain, began to get the better of Parrot, the teacher. Like Gobbo, he fought manfully with the devil inside, but——

"And Moses said to Pharo— Luff, you blistered son of a jelly-fish! Luff—you're two points off the wind!"

NOW, when the mutiny took place, and the colored cook—who really belonged to the afterguard and was, therefore, a traitor—came aft as the herald of the mutineers, Parrot was sitting in his cabin cogitating over his ill-success as a teacher. His efforts did not seem to have met with the result they deserved. There was just as much bad language, for instance, as there had been before. He was muttering.

"I'll make this crew religious if I have to rope's-end the lot of them."

Prior to the ambassadorial effort of the cook, the men had talked a great deal, seeking a more or less valid excuse for bearding the captain. Their simple souls had no objection to religion as religion; only to the captain's teaching it to them. But as they did not like to take the risk of telling him this directly and in ordinary language, and they struggled to find a befitting excuse.

They found many excuses for protest, but not one which they felt would have any chance of success. All the things they could invent seemed only to point to blistering answers, harder work, fewer watches below in the afternoons and such like unpleasantness. But they continued to seek.

It was one Peters, a gentleman of unknown nationality but probably of several, it was Peters who was inspired to become the forecastle Moses who would endeavor to lead his mates away from the bondage of Pharo Parrot.

"I got it," he announced in the midst of a blue meeting which had become mute. "I got it!"

"Got wot?" queried a skeptical and cynical cockney.

"Religious liberty, guaranteed by every constitution on earth," said Peters ecstatically.

"Liberty. Constitutions," growled the cockney. "A fat lot old Pol cares abart liberty or constitutions. Least of all ours, wot with 'is workin' us up an' all. A fat lot old Pol cares abart constitutions when we're a thousand miles from land!"

"We'll tell him in a round robin," pursued Peters.

"Wot's the good of that," said the cockney. "Even if you can write, you've got to say somethink, 'aven't you? Which is wot we've been trying to do. Better swaller 'is Bible readin's. 'Tain't doing us much 'arm."

"Anyway, I'll write it," said Peters, "if so being the rest of you is willing to sign along of me. Them that can not sign can make their marks. I'll just ask him to cut out his teaching on Sundays. Make it look like as if we was going to teach ourselves, like. Save him the trouble and thank him for his kindness."

The cockney spat silently but expressively.

"Will you all put your names around the robin?" asked Peters.

"It won't be a robin if we don't. That's forecastle law," said the cockney.

"You go ahead and write it if you can find paper and pencil."

"But ain't it mutiny?" asked one timid soul.

The cockney laughed.

"Mutiny, course not. Mr. Peters 'ere don't deal in mutinies. 'E writes round robins and calls 'em religious wars."

But Peters was not to be deterred by scoffers. The timid would sign or make their marks when he commanded. Few of them could read, anyhow. This thought impressed him with the need of careful caligraphy. It would never do to send aft a robin which the captain would not be able to read.

"Don't ask me to take yer Robin aft," remarked the cockney.

"I won't!" Peters looked up and saw the cook, who was not supposed to be familiar with the sailors, listening with much interest. "I won't ask you. I'll get the most intelligent man I can find to do it. You'd make a mess of it."

"Who'll you get?" the cockney grinned.

"Oh, cook—cook could you oblige me with some writin' paper. Most of us here ain't got the education to have such things!"

Peters beamed and the cook fell. The cockney hid his delighted face, but the other men looked on with astonishment.

But the agreeable and smiling cook lacked writing paper. He would never have admitted this before the men after what Peters had said, and he pretended carefully to search his bag. But he did not fool the astute Peters.

"Oh, used it all," exclaimed that marine Machiavelli. "All you handsome chaps writes so many letters to girls. Never mind, maybe you can find some other sort of paper that will do. What the likes of us writes on don't matter much."

The flattered cook owned a pair of lurid socks, as yet virgin. Around these was wrapped some paper. With some hesitation—but whether he hesitated on account of the socks or on account of the feelings of Peters, is not known—he then offered the wrapping paper.

"Fine," said Peters with gallant heartiness, yet secretly troubled lest the captain, eventually discovering the author of the round robin, might suspect him of lack of taste or even sheer ignorance of the correct thing in writing papers.

Many great men have never mastered spelling, and Peters was one of these.

"Old Pol will know what we mean," he said hopefully as he labored.

"Let's 'ope so—or not, as the case may be," said the cynical cockney.

As Peters warmed to his task some dim memory of the early protestant heroes cheered him. His history was somewhat mixed, and so he debited the persecutions of the reformers to Nero. By this time he was thinking of lions and howling Roman mobs. He paused. He had no desire to be a martyr, and began to feel unhappy. He was between the —— of his jeering mates if he did not go on with his task and the deep sea of the wrath of Captain Parrot if he did.

But the fact of the impossibility of ascribing a round robin to any particular individual because of its circle of signatures, relieved his fears. He possessed no distinctive style of caligraphy, and Parrot would not have known it if he had, but he took much care to disguise his writing.

"It ain't like we was refusing to do ship work or anything," he said as he finished. "And we're not refusing to be religious. Only asking for freedom to be religious our own way. He can't get mad about that, can he?"

"Well, you wrote it," said the cockney ungratefully.

"But you all put your names to it," parried the scribe. "And he won't know who began it."

"Let's 'ope not," the cockney was enjoying himself. "Of course you don't know old Pol because this is your first voyage with him. But I do. This is my fourth voyage along of him. Each time the bleedin', boardin' 'ousekeeper promised to get me an easy ship, wiv a gentleman for a captain, and each time I woke up in my bunk with the ship at sea and Hard Case Pol, captain of her. Let's 'ope 'e won't catch on to who sterted this 'ere robin. You don't know 'im like wot I do, or you'd never 'ave done it."

PETERS seemed distressed, but it was too late to draw back because the cook, entranced by the the magic flattery of Peters into a joyful irresponsibility and complete forgetfulness of his traitorous position, had gone aft with the round robin. Had some one mentioned, just whispered to him, that in war times—and he had heard the cockney call this a religious war—had some kind spirit told him that traitors were shot in times of war, and explained that he, the cook, was a traitor, he would have jumped over the side rather than have gone aft with such a dignified manner, stiffening his greasy dungarees. But there was no one to warn him or even suggest that as one of the afterguard, his position as ambassador of mutineers was dubious. He smiled quite happily and naturally when he asked the second mate if he could speak to the captain, that captain who even then was considering spreading religion with the end of a rope!

And sitting on the fore hatch, the cockney was saying consolingly to a worried Peters.

"Of course you ain't scared. But that's because you don't know old Pol and his little ways like wot I do!"

"Better wait awhile, cook," said the second mate good naturedly. "The old old man seems sore about something."

"But, Mister Wilson, sir, I must see him!"

And the cook, with vast importance, showed the neatly folded paper.

"What have you got there?" demanded the second mate, becoming interested.

"I can't tell you, sir. It's—it's private—for the Old Man."

The second mate was human and curious. There was but one thing to do if he were to satisfy his curiosity. He walked down the poop ladder.

"You wait here, cook," he said at the cabin door. "I'll let you know if the captain will see you."

So the cook waited, while the second mate went in, trying to smooth the grin from his face set there by his speculations concerning the matter about which the cook would write letters to the captain and the manner of the captain when he received the letter. He had never heard of cooks writing letters to captains. Never before. Therefore this was a sort of experiment of the cook's. And Pol was not the sort of man upon whom to try experiments. Not. Particularly not the experiments of cooks. Writing to the captain as if they were equals. The interest of the second mate increased, but his curiosity concerning the letter was dimmed by his curiosity concerning what the captain would do to the writer of it. For of course the second mate had no reasons for supposing that any one but the cook was the writer.

"The cook wants to see you sir. He's acting mail-man to his own mail."

"What—what are you talking about, Mister," snapped the captain, who was in no mood for jests.

"The cook is aft, sir; and he has a letter he's written to you which he wants to deliver."

The captain stared. Then he sniffed. No, the second mate was sober. Was it the sun, then?

"Mister Wilson, do you mean to stand there and tell me that the cook has written a letter to me. To me? And that he is aft here wanting to deliver it?"

"That's what he says, sir," replied the second mate cheerfully.

The captain gasped. Then he became himself again.

"Bring him in, Mister; and when he's in the cabin do you shut the door so he can't get out till I've finished with him. And put your back against it. Write letters to me, will he? Even if he has gone crazy it's no excuse!"

The second mate walked along the alleyway, feeling in better health than at any other time since his last girl had jilted him, and beckoned the cook. That one's dark face showed less hilarity, more interest in the deeper values of life, as it were, and possibly of death. Some dim echo of jungle instinct had scented danger, and while the consciousness of the ambassador had not as yet translated the feeling of fear into either thought or action, its presence was sufficient to chill. Given a half hour longer to wait he might have realized that it were better that he retired to his galley, with the missive undelivered.

"Come in, cook," said the second mate in strangely gentle tones.

"Yes, suh."

The cook advanced, hesitating as that most impolite of men, the second mate, politely stood aside to allow him, the cook, precedence along the alleyway to the waiting captain.

"The captain's waiting, cook."

And the cook hesitated no longer. That foolish self-importance which has ruined so many of us, held him in its tentacles. He ceased to wonder at the politeness of the second mate. He had no business with such low persons as second mates. Was not the captain himself waiting for him?

"Yes, cook, what is it?"

Hard Case Pol spoke as gently as the second mate had spoken, which in itself was a danger signal. But his eyes, directed upon that round robin which he supposed to be a letter from the cook to himself, showed no gentleness, neither mercy. They glowed with a fire which seemed to have been especially kindled to incinerate cooks. And the unfortunate African, while not entirely appreciating the enormity of his crime, crumpled under that heat. Something was wrong. Just what it was did not matter half so much as did the prospect of escape. The trapped cook turned in terror to the door. It was closed, and the unusually broad shoulders of the erstwhile gentle second mate were stretched across it.

"Yes, cook, what is it?"

There was less gentleness in the voice of Captain Parrot.

"Suh—Oh, jus nothing, jus nothing," the cook wailed.

"So you come aft here, taking up my time and the time of the second mate for nothing, eh? What do you mean by that," rasped Pol.

The cook could not face that glare. In desperation he turned, with pity pleading from his eyes, to the second mate. The second mate apparently saw him not.

"What have you got in your hand?"

The captain was getting to the heart of the matter.

"Oh, sir. Just nothing, just nothing, sir, Captain Parrot, sir."

"You lie like a horse. Give me that letter."

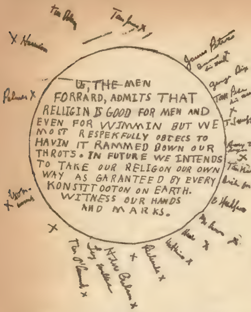
"It ain't no letter, Captain, sir. No letter, sir."

"Give it to me, and keep your mouth shut."

IT IS probable that this command robbed Parrot of an interesting explanation of the letter which he seized from the trembling hand, although that command was not literally obeyed. Its meaning, however, was. For the cook said nothing. He was far too scared. But his mouth remained open at a most acute angle.

Captain Parrot unfolded the missive and gazed at it while the deeply interested second mate, who could not leave the door, suffered from curiosity in a silence as deep as the cook's.

The captain's gaze concentrated upon something like this:



WE, THE MEN
FORRARD, ADMITS THAT
RELLIGIN IS GOOD FOR MEN AND
EVEN FOR WIMMIN BUT WE
MOST RESPEKFULLY OBJECS TO
HAVIN IT RAMMED DOWN OUR
THROTS. IN FUTURE WE INTENDS
TO TAKE OUR RELIGON OUR OWN
WAY AS GARANTEED BY EVERY
KONSTITOOTON ON EARTH.
WITNESS OUR HANDS
AND MARKS.

Words are impotent! And Captain Parrot said nothing. The silence became horrible. It was broken by the frantic babble of the cook who was collapsing under the frown of that spinx-like face staring at the letter.

"Shut up. Come here, Mister Wilson."

The second mate obeyed with alacrity, but as the captain had rolled the round robin into a hard ball, he was bereft of the pleasure of reading it. He felt hurt.

"Mister Wilson, I think you are the strongest man on the ship. Let me see you grip this fool and force his mouth open. I am going to see that he eats every bit of this fool paper."

To describe what followed would be as painful as reading that awful book, "Surgical Operations Prior to Anesthesia." A graphic description of the horrors of the torture chamber of the Tower of London would be mild by comparison. Let us not even inflict reflected misery upon an already suffering world. Let it suffice, the cook ate every scrap of that round robin. But what he thought of the captain who gave the order and what he thought of the strength of the fingers of the second mate, are subjects best avoided. We do not use that kind of language.

"Go forward, cook," the captain spoke with no gentleness. "If there was any one to do the cooking besides you, I'd throw you over the side. And don't mix with the men again. They have made a bigger fool of you than your parents did. Mister Wilson, call all hands aft. I want to talk to them."

"Lay aft, all hands!"

The voice of the second mate roared along the deck and certain of those who had signed the round robin trembled, while the chief conspirator felt distinctly unhappy. The least any of them expected was Captain Parrot standing on the break of the poop and taking shots at them with his revolver. Instead of this, he began to talk like a father who has only the kindest interest in the welfare of his children; but this parental attitude of voice did not last.

"Like a lot of children," he leaned over the rail before the mizzen mast. "Like a lot of boys you send that idiot of a cook aft with what you call a round robin. Now, why didn't you come aft like men, and tell me what was the trouble? Eh? Have I ever refused to talk to you? You benighted sons of ignorant heathens. So you want liberty to go your own way in religion, do you? Well, where do you think your way of religious liberty will take you. There is only one place, and that's a whole lot hotter than the equator. But I'm going to do the best I can for you. You may sail your own religious course, but I am going to supply the charts. Steward!"

The quiet but crescendo voice rose to a sudden howl, and the steward appeared, precipitately.

"Bring those Bibles out of my cabin, steward."

"Very good, sir."

At the word Bibles, a wave seemed to go over the assembled crew, while the second mate gazed at the horizon as if he saw a distant ship. Every man of them had known the superstition concerning Bibles since he had first gone to sea, and there were those who had been at sea for nearly half a century. The Bibles arrived.

"Is there any reading matter in the forecastle?" demanded Hard Case Pol. "Have you any books there? How many of you can read, anyhow? Those that can read hold up their right hands."

Three hands were held aloft; one started to go up but the owner of it did not seem certain that what he knew about reading was enough to entitle him to be called a reader, so he put it down again.

The captain looked very grave.

"Go forrard, two of you, and bring aft all the books, papers and reading matter there is in the forecastle."

The men went aft, and when they came aft again, bearing the small, pitiful reading matter of windjammers of that date, the gravity of the captain increased. Piece by piece he examined that reading matter, and piece by piece he handed it back to a trembling sailor after examination.

His features set in awful doom, like a judge about to pronounce sentence of execution. The second mate ceased to be interested in the remote horizon, and approached quietly. But Parrot, who never reprimanded an officer before the men, said—

"Go and see how she's heading, Mister," in a tone which clearly meant that the literature he was examining was no stuff for the eyes of a decent second mate.

So for the second time that day the second mate was bitterly disappointed. As a matter of fact, the reading matter was as harmless as skimmed milk.

"So," said Parrot in a terrible voice. "So, you that reads such muck as this asks for liberty to learn religion your own way, do you? Its a good thing that I take more interest in my men than some captains do."

The men doubted the goodness, but said nothing.

Then Parrot turned upon the men holding the reading matter and fairly shouted—

"Throw that stuff overboard!"

Oliver Cromwell could not have done it better, or could not have been obeyed more rapidly.

It was said of Captain Parrot that he could stand aft at the wheel and make himself heard by a man on the end of the jibboom if his ship was heading into a hurricane. Always provided, of course, that a man could exist on the end of the jibboom during a hurricane. It was with the same sort of roar that he would have been required to use under those interesting conditions that he now shouted.

"How many of you has Bibles?"

Not a man admitted having a Bible.

"I thought so." The voice, striving to express sorrow, could have been heard by normal ears half a mile away. "I thought so, you low, unchristian heathens." Acute pain pulsed in his tones. "I was afraid of this. Suppose some preacher came aboard to pay us a visit when we get to port. Suppose one did, and when he asked me if my men had Bibles I had to tell him no. You may well hang your dirty heads. But I'll change all that. I'm going to serve out Bibles to every one of you. You know what happens if you don't treat them right. The man that tears or anyway mishandles one of these Bibles knows what is coming to him.

"I wouldn't do this usually, but you demanded religious liberty. The British Empire is founded on religious liberty, so I have to let you have it. And this is a British ship, even if most of you is either Dutchmen or runaways that no country will own. You shall have your religious liberty, but I'm thinking that most of you will wish that you had let me teach you. Now, every one of you read these Bibles. You'd better, because next week I'm going to ask every man questions in his watch below, and the man that fails to answer any Bible question I ask will suffer. Them what can't read, get the others to read to them. And don't dirty them Bibles." The voice rose again. "Steward, serve out Bibles to every man in the forecastle. Religious liberty, eh—well, now you have charts to help you find your way."

DANTE, assisted by Milton, might possibly describe the awful misery of the *Kenyon's* forecastle during the next few days. The superstition regarding Bibles terrified; anticipation of Captain Parrot's intended questioning terrified; possibility of harm coming to the Bibles also terrified; the men who could read were afraid to read and the men who could not read were afraid because they couldn't.

And then, of course, the fine weather left them, and the fair wind became foul. It is reasonable to suppose that Hard Case Pol had counted on this meteorlogical assistance. But to the men it was the working of the dire superstition, and they wondered who was the jonah who had torn a leaf. The second day of the gale, with the deck full of water and the *Kenyon* under a goose-winged main lower topsail, the men could stand it no longer. In forty-eight hours the threatened examination was due, and not a man had read a line. Religious liberty was good, but freedom from fear was better. And there had been at least seventeen fights.

Peters, indeed, could hardly walk.

And so, Captain Parrot, stamping briskly about the weather side of the poop, observed his men standing humbly to leeward. One of them, bearing a Bible carefully protected under his oilskins, approached after the manner of a Nubian slave to a Roman emperor.

"Captain Parrot, sir?"

Parrot walked to and fro for three minutes as if he had not heard. Then suddenly, in fearful tones—

"Well, what is it?"

""If you please, sir—if you please, we thinks you had better teach us. We—we ain't quite enough educated for that there religious liberty, sir."

Parrot bore down on the men, his frown a threatening weapon.

"Are those Bibles in good shape?"

"Oh, yes, sir. We got 'em all wrapped up, sir, and clean."

"Give me one of them."

From the many hastily offered, Parrot selected a Bible.

"Steward," he yelled down the companion-way.

And when the steward appeared—

"Collect those Bibles and stow them away."

This was done, and the captain with a gesture drove the men aft by the wheel to where he had first essayed to teach religion. The wind cut like a knife of myriad blades, the spray and sleet sang wildly across the ship, but the men felt almost happy. Even when the captain began to read in thunderous tones about Moses and the plagues of Egypt, while they shivered in the cold, even then, when they thought of the misery of the past few days, even then they felt happy.

"Now," said Parrot severely. "Now, I'm going to read the Bible to you heathen whenever I feel that you need it, day or night. By the time I'm done with you you'll know something about it. Liberty means knowledge and responsibility, and when I have given you the first and you're fit for the second you won't have to make any fool round robins."

He looked carefully to windward.

"Mister Mate, take these seekers after the truth forrard. She'll stand that fore lower topsail goose-winged."

FATE AND THE FISH-HOOKS

by Thomas Dunbabin

A FISHERWOMAN of many moods is Fate. When she has hooked a man she may either jerk him to his doom with one turn of the wrist or she may play him round the world and back again.

To William Swallow, as he stumbled on board the Colonial brig *Cyprus* at Hobart Town in Van Diemen's Land, on a fine September morning in the year 1830, it seemed that the last fatal jerk had been given. With fifty convict companions, all heavily ironed and dressed, like him, in the hideous yellow uniform, liberally sprinkled with broad arrows, which gave to the long-sentenced prisoners the nickname of "canaries," he was bound to the hell of Macquarie Harbor. They felt that they were not only as good as dead but a great deal worse.

For forty years Great Britain had been using Australia as a dumping ground for the surplus population of her prisons. The island of Van Diemen's Land, later to change its name to Tasmania, was one vast prison of which Macquarie Harbor was the center. Midway in an iron-bound coast, beaten upon by the huge sea which, driven by the westerly winds that sweep right round the world in these latitudes, rolls without a break from the far off shores of Tierra del Fuego, the narrow passage known as Hell's Gate opens into a broad harbor. On the landward side wild mountains covered with thick forest, dripping with almost perpetual rain, barred escape.

Men who had tried to escape through these inhospitable forests had been driven to cannibalism by hunger. Only one man, Alexander Pearce, the man-eater, had won through to the settled country beyond. With seven other convicts he had broke loose from the gangs which worked at felling huge trees, floating them down to the settlement and cutting them up. The little stock of provisions that they had contrived to save from their scanty rations were soon exhausted.

Two men turned back and gave themselves up. The other six struggled on through the dark forest without food, without fire, wet through day and night. Then they came to a river that they could not cross. One of them, Travers, had fallen lame. His companions killed and ate him as the only means of saving their lives. Strengthened by this abhorrent food they crossed the river and worked their way through the woods beyond. Hunger again assailed them and they drew lots. The man who drew the shortest stick was killed and his mates devoured his raw flesh. So it went on till but two men remained—Pearce and Matthew Greenhill. Pearce was unarmed while Greenhill had an ax.

For three days and three nights they never slept, each waiting for the other to give way. Greenhill gave out first. Pearce killed him with his own ax and then stripped the flesh from his bones. The flesh of the last survivor of his five companions gave Pearce strength to struggle out into the open country. He gave himself up, desiring, as he said, rather to die than to live. He had his wish for he died on the gallows at Hobart Town.

Such was the port to which the *Cyprus* was to carry Swallow and his fifty fellow convicts; a place of horror and gloom where desperate men drew lots to see which would kill the other, and where the lucky one was he who drew the lot which made him the victim.

Yet with the help of a few fish-hooks Fate was to give Swallow 25,000 miles of line and then, with the aid of those same fish-hooks, to bring him back to captivity.

When she had run a quarter of the 230 miles between Hobart Town and Hell's Gate, the *Cyprus* lay becalmed in Recherche Bay, waiting for the breeze which would enable her to turn the corner of the island at Whale Head. There were fish-hooks on board and fish to be caught in the bay. So the soldiers of the guard took a boat and went fishing.

While they were away Swallow and his canaries rose on those who remained on board, and took the vessel. When the fishermen returned from their fishing they were caught, too. Guards and seamen alike were put ashore to make their way to Hobart Town. With them went several women, wives of officers accompanying their husbands to Macquarie Harbor. The men whom fate had made prisoners in their turn were forced to dress in the yellow uniforms of the convicts while Swallow and his men masqueraded in the clothes of the officers and sailors. The women left behind them rich dresses, ornaments and trinkets. They seemed of little use to Swallow, but everything has its value.

When the breeze so long awaited did come the *Cyprus* did not round Whale Head, but stood away for New Zealand. Swallow had been a sailor in his day, serving in American vessels, and he could set a course and sail a ship, little use as most of his new crew were.

The *Cyprus* never reached port; but a few weeks later Captain Billy Worth of the *Brothers* and Captain John Guard of the *Waterloo*, two Sydney whaling schooners lying at anchor at Port Underwood on the New Zealand coast, were surprized by the appearance of an American brig, the *Friends* of Boston, which had called in for wood and water on a voyage from Manila to the west coast of South America.

The *Friends* had been newly painted black and the letters of her name were fresh and bright. Though her master Captain Walker, whom his crew sometimes addressed as Swallow, was evidently a smart sailor and spoke with a down east accent, there was little of the discipline common on American vessels. In fact the rough and ready looking crew behaved in a very free and easy fashion.

A couple of days after the arrival of the stranger, Urias Allender, a harpooner on the *Waterloo*, decided that it might be worth while to catch something smaller than whales. Urias Allender came from Hobart Town and, unlike many whalers of his day, he could read print. To fish he needed hooks, and having none he borrowed a few from a sailor on the *Friends* of Boston. The hooks were wrapped in a bit of torn newspaper. Newspapers were rare in old New Zealand and Allender glanced at it.

There was a familiar look about it. Urias soon found that it was a bit of the "Colonial Times," published in Hobart Town a few weeks earlier. Obviously the story that the *Friends* of Boston had come direct from Manila was a cock-and-bull yarn. When he had finished his fishing, for he was a man who believed in finishing one thing before beginning another, Allender told Captain Guard of his discovery.

He also told him that, while her color was different, the *Friends* of Boston looked to him the image of the Van Diemen's Land brig, *Cyprus*. Guard took fire at the idea of seizing the vessel and her crew of runaway convicts. There was a reward to be earned which might be worth more than many whales. But Guard's crew alone was heavily outnumbered by Swallow's crew of desperate runaways.

So Guard went to Worth with his story. It looked as if Fate were tired of playing with her fish. But Worth, a most unusual thing with the whaling schooners of the day, had his wife on board, and Mrs. Worth had a word to say. Swallow, with a generosity not without a touch of calculation, had given to her some of the stuffs and trinkets left behind by the officers' wives sent ashore in Recherche Bay. He invented an explanation for their presence on board which was convincing enough for Mrs. Worth.

Now his generosity with other people's goods was amply repaid.

"Your business is to catch whales, not to put your head into a mare's nest on the strength of some story about a fish-hook and a newspaper," she said to her husband. "As to Captain Walker, if there were more men like him the world would be a better place."

The gray mare was the better horse and Worth refused to join in the attack. Lacking his help, Guard could not act and the *Friends* of Boston sailed in peace. Ill-found as she was for a long voyage, Swallow drove her north across the Pacific. By sheer force of character he established some sort of discipline amongst his reckless, riotous crew. When they would have settled in some pleasant island of the South Seas he reminded them that they ran the risk of being plucked thence by a British warship; as the fifteen convicts who had carried away the schooner *Phoebe* from the Shoalhaven River in New South Wales had been plucked from the Society Islands only the year before.

So they pushed far to the north and, after months of voyaging, made a landfall on the coast of the hermit kingdom of Japan, then still closed to foreigners as it had been for two centuries, and not to be visited by Admiral Perry for another quarter of a century. Seven men, rightly confident that the long arm of the British navy would not reach them in this unknown land and assured that for them Japan could not be worse than Van Diemen's Land, went ashore in one of the ship's boats and stayed there.

If he could have read aright the men of the fish-hooks Swallow might have done the same. But he had other plans. He had sailed in American vessels and he knew that Canton was a port to which they much resorted. He pointed out to his companions that once they reached America they would be safe. They might even, if they cared to do so, turn respectable and become citizens of credit as others had done in like case.

To reach America in the battered *Cyprus* was hopeless. So off the mouth of the Canton River the *Friends* of Boston foundered at sea and her crew reached Canton in the boats. For the moment all went well. The committee of supercargoes at Canton provided for the distressed mariners until they could ship in outward-bound vessels. As survivors of a New England vessel they showed a natural desire to ship in American ships.

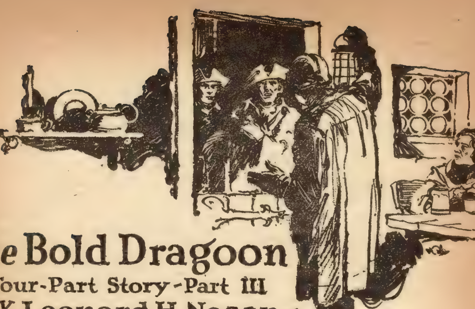
But while Swallow was still waiting for a ship a vessel arrived from Sydney. Amongst her crew was Urias Allender, once a harpooner on the *Waterloo* who had borrowed fish-hooks at Fort Underwood. On the waterside at Canton he met the man who had lent him the hooks wrapped in a bit of newspaper. Urias talked and some of Swallow's men had babbled under the spell of rice spirit.

When the crew of the *Friends* of Boston left Canton they sailed in a limejuicer. All those that the committee of supercargoes had been able to lay hold of were in irons and bound to London. From London they were sent back the weary voyage to Van Diemen's Land.

At Hobart Town they were placed on their trial on a charge of piracy on the high seas. The case was clear, and the humanity which Swallow and his followers had shown, when they seized the *Cyprus* in Recherche Bay setting the guard and crew on shore, stood them in evil stead. With cruel mercy their lives were spared and they were sent to Macquarie Harbor instead of to the gallows. Like others in the same case, they begged as a favor that they might be hanged out of hand, but the boon was denied them.

On a fine spring morning in the year 1831 the survivors of the fifty men who had been driven on board the *Cyprus* went on board the schooner *Prince Leopold*, bound for Macquarie Harbor. They were chained to one another. Attached to the right leg of each by a stout chain was the heavy ball that gave to those who wore it for long a limp that never left them as long as life lasted.

This time there was no clam in Recherche Bay and no use for the fish-hooks of Fate.



The Bold Dragoon

A Four-Part Story-Part III

by **Leonard H. Nason**

Author of "Eye-Wash," "Rockets at Daybreak," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IT WAS in June, 1743, that we routed the French at Dettingen, in Bavaria. We had been without food or fodder for many a day, and as soon as the French broke, leaving open the road to Hanau, the army forgot the enemy in its eagerness to reach its base of supplies.

My nag was in such a plight that I was left behind, and in the night came upon a French officer and killed him after a long-drawn fight. I relieved him of a fine sword, rings, gold buttons and other booty. Then Austrian marauders, our allies, set upon me. Badly wounded, I lay out in the marshes until a party of our own men found me and carted me to Hanau.

A physician named Gulf took me into his house and cared for me in exchange for one of the rings I had taken from the Frenchman. When the army marched out of Hanau I was left behind, for I was still very weak. Some days later I was discharged although I was in no state to travel, and the doctor would have robbed me of my last gold button had I given him the chance.

At a near-by tavern I met a youth, Viscount Barnet, who had deserted his post because he wished to reach England in a great hurry. An estate awaited him there, but he was without funds and in debt. He suggested that I let him exchange my booty for money, lend half the sum to him, and that we travel together to the coast. This I agreed to do, although Gulf cursed me for a fool, and went so far as to offer me a commission in the army of the Pretender, Charles Stuart, but I cursed him back and left his house.

We started, the viscount and I, in the Frankfort diligence, but were held up by a scouting party which tried to slaughter us, for the officer knew that Barnet was a deserter. We were almost beaten when a party of horsemen that I had seen at Gulf's house, came to our rescue. They cut down the scouting party and rode away. No sign could I find of Barnet until I reentered the diligence and found him hiding beneath a bale of goods.

"Do you owe those men money?" I asked.

"Well, not money, but something of the sort," said he, and then would speak no more, but held his peace, chewing upon his fingers.

WHEN we reached Frankfort we hired horses to continue our journey. A fortnight later we put up at an inn near Brussels, where there were many English officers. One of them picked a quarrel with us, and the viscount killed him. He escaped, leaving me to defend myself as best I might until knocked down and sorely beaten.

I awoke in a stable midden. The viscount was there and helped me mount my horse and away. But I was so weak and bruised that I could not sit my horse and fell off very soon. Barnet left me, for he was in grave danger, agreeing to meet me at the sign of the *Gaper* in the town of Williamstadt.

Next day I found that the viscount had taken my last penny, and I had to beg my way afoot to the seaport. There I found an English boat whose skipper first took me later to the sign of the *Gaper*, where I was told that the viscount had sailed the week before for England, and then aboard his vessel.

I slept so soundly that I awoke only when we were well out to sea. On board were the six travelers who had saved us from the scouting party. They disclosed themselves as agents of the Pretender, and their leader asked me to serve with them. When I stoutly refused I was given until we reached the coast to agree to his proposal or die.

When we hove to, however, we were set upon by Gagers and soldiery and I escaped in the dark. The near-by villagers were in arms because a local tavern

"The Bold Dragoon," copyright, 1925, by Leonard H. Nason.

keeper had been taken by the press gang and forced to enlist. After being embroiled with them for half a night I broke away and made my way across the moor until a coach overtook me, and I climbed into the "rumble-tumble." I slept soundly until the coach was halted by a highwayman. I hid by the roadside, my sword still lying in the rumble-tumble, until the coach drove off, then I leaped out of hiding and took possession of the highwayman's loot. One man, who had tried to resist, sprawled unconscious and unnoticed in the middle of the path.

Having relieved the highwayman of his ill-gotten gains I helped him to mount with the toe of my boot, and sent him on his way.

MY NEXT thought was for the impetuous gentleman who had tried to seize the highwayman. I had to paw around in the dark for some time before I found him, for the impetus of his rush from the coach had carried him off the road and under the hedge.

I kicked against the robber's first pistol, where he had dropped it when he drew the other, and then I felt of a boot and so to my gentleman, whom I found lying on one elbow, fumbling at his broken head and trying to gather his scattered wits.

"Who's that?" he demanded hoarsely.

Then as a recollection came upon him he rolled upon his other side and after a moment's search, thrust a purse at me.

"Keep your purse," I ordered. "You have the wrong man. Jack-of-the-roads is gone and is half way to the next town by now. Can you walk?"

"I'll know better in a minute," said he, drawing out from under the hedge where, after a little effort, he stood upright. "That was a sad knock he fetched me," said the man, reeling a little. "But who might you be?"

"I was riding in the rumble-tumble," said I, "and ducked into the ditch, where the shadow of the hedge kept me from being seen."

"Where is the coach?"

"Gone on," said I, "fast enough, and here we are in the midst of this forsaken dingle and night set in."

"There will be a moon," he suggested hopefully.

"Not for some time," said I, "if you will remember last night."

"That is true," he agreed, "it will rise late. Well, we can not be far from an inn, for the coach inns at dark and it was just at nightfall that this wolf set upon us. We have but to follow the road. I suppose our man will give us no trouble, now that he has all our money."

"I doubt if he returns, but yet he might. Have you a sword?" I asked.

"Paul's blood!" cried the man, clapping hand to his thigh. "I left it in the coach. Have you?"

"In the coach. But here is a pistol the highwayman dropped. It may be useful as a club. I have one of my own that will bite. I repeat, I doubt if he returns, he went away fast enough."

"With our gold to speed him," added the young man.

"You lost no money," I reminded him.

"Perhaps not," he said, "but the others did. If my foot had not caught on the edge of the step, not a one would have been a groat the poorer. I would have wrung that poaching ruffian's neck, I warrant you."

"Doubtless," I agreed dryly, "but they are none the poorer, nevertheless, for I have secured what was taken."

"By the teeth of ——!" cried he. "I think you are the rogue himself! If it were not so dark I could be surer! Secured what was taken! Hear him! A sheep takes its prey from the wolf, the hawk drops its plundered fowl when bidden! If it were lighter you might see that there is no green in my eye! Come! I suppose the thief was stricken in conscience and gave it you back!"

"If I were a thief," I replied in as stern a tone as I could muster, "I would have pistoled you out of hand and left you to rot under the hedge. I would also inform you that you speak to Hugh Bancroft, late of Ligoniers regiment of horse, and one not used to having the lie in his teeth. Be —— to you!" And I turned to stride off.

"True enough," he muttered. "Hold! I want no quarrel with you. Wait, now! This blow upon my skull has addled me. I am wrong. My hand!"

Now when this man had first spoken, his speech was so thick and dazed that I could scarce tell what he said, but as he came to himself and spoke more clearly, it seemed to me that I had heard his voice before. Where I could not at that moment tell, but heard it I had, and no doubt of it. I tried to see his face but could not, for it was so dark in that cursed dingle, that I could not so much as make out the shape of his hat.

So we set off together, my companion

stopping from time to time, and swearing to himself. Once I heard the lock of his pistol click and there being no good reason why he should cock it, I let down the hammer of mine with my thumb and then hauled it back again loudly, so that he should know that I was also armed.

"It is a difficult thing to hit a man in the dark," I remarked.

"Aye," said he, "so it is."

And after that we held no more speech.

We continued for some time in this manner, he complaining from to time of his broken head, and at last reached the outskirts of a town of some size. A short way down the principal street was the inn, where the coach rested overnight, and thither we took our way. The innyard was deserted, the coach had been rolled under a kind of shed, where it kept company with several carters' wagons, their poles propped on sticks, pointing to the stars. There was no sign of life here save a few skulking dogs, but a cheery light shone from the windows of the common room and a very pleasant odor of baking meat saluted us.

Presently we came into the light from the window and my companion turned his face away, but not so quickly but what I saw who he was. It was my merry viscount.

"Ha!" said I, my hand on his collar. "Well met, by cock and pie!"

"Let go your hand, my bouncing dragoon," said he, "I knew you when you rapped out your name so vigorously a half hour agone. Listen! I have news of import for you! Never think I abandoned you! What! I waited two weeks for you, but my affairs pressed; I had to go. Now come in, let us drink a dram or two, and all shall be made clear."

I had my doubts of him, but now that he was under my hand, we might as well go in, as stand chinning in that dark inn-yard where it was cold and unsavory, so we went to the door and so entered.

WITHIN, before the great hearth, there was a small company. The merchant stood with his back to the blaze, declaiming, and the two countrymen who had ridden with us listened with gaping mouths. There were three or four others there, people of the neighborhood, and a beribboned sergeant, either on his way to join a recruiting party or returning to London after having left one.

The inn's host skipped merrily about, now running out to the kitchen to watch the progress of the cooking, now bending at some one's demand for another jack of ale, and ever and anon glancing about to be sure that there were no sneakers there and that every one present was paying for the warmth of the fire by buying generously of the inn's drinkables.

It was after one of these hurried glances that the host discovered us standing in the shadow of the door. At once he swooped at us and catching a lanthorn from behind the settle, he lifted it high and inspected us.

"Wot 'ave we 'ere?" he demanded coarsely. "Now, then, speak up, lads, wot can we do for you? But first, there'll be no sleeping in the 'ay, and so you may save your breath by not harsking for it."

I was so struck down by this greeting that I could find no reply—indeed I am slow of speech at best—but the viscount rapped out a volley of oaths and striding forward, caught mine host by the collar of his smock and nigh throttled him.

"—— your blood!" cried the viscount. "Here is a pretty way to treat a gentleman. By the hair of Luke, I will toast you at your own fire!"

Here the merchant ceased his exhortation on the unsafeness of the highways and watched what was going forward with his jaw hanging.

"Rooms and food and a hot drink! And quick, too," continued the viscount. "——'s blood! No sleeping in the hay! I'll hay you!"

And he fell to beating the host with the full strength of his arm. The company arose and pried the two apart.

"Peace!" cried the merchant. "I am a magistrate and I command you both to lay down your arms and abide in peace under penalty of invocation of the statutes made and provided against public brawling! Why bless my soul," he exclaimed in astonishment, "it is the viscount. Hold hard, landlord, stop beating that young man. I know him well, it is Viscount Barnet. What! landlord, stop it now!"

Inasmuch as the landlord was quite black in the face and could but feebly parry the shower of blows the viscount was pouring upon him, it was difficult to see what the landlord should stop. The attacker, however, held his hand and suffered the poor host to rise, gasping and clawing at his throat.

"Ah, good young man!" cried the merchant. "Safe and sound! Safe and sound! We were mustering our force here, you see, mustering our force to go out and find you. We were to apply to the law here, we were to have out the *possecomitatus*, we were to rouse the country with bell and blaze, but now you are here, and it is not necessary. Tell us how you are! Ho, a glass of wine here! Wine for the viscount!"

Several of the company laid aside various weapons that they had and hastened to bring wine, while the rest bustled about for napkins, plasters, and such like to bind the viscount's wound. When he had had a glass of wine and a peg or two from the leathern jack, the viscount waved them all to silence and began his explanation.

The poor host, still wobbling his neck and feeling of his throat, humbly contrived to apologize, pointing out that the lanthorn gave but a feeble light, that the viscount was quite bloody and had upon him a great deal of mire, where he had lain under the hedge, and moreover, not arriving with the coach, the landlord had thought him one of the many masterless rogues, discharged soldiers and runaway apprentices that were continually beseeching him for barn room. To all this the viscount turned a deaf ear, but having had another peg from the leathern jack, he began his account of his adventures.

"Now then, gentlemen, you remember when the robber had discharged his pistol by accident and I had rushed forth to seize him, that he was adroit enough to fetch me a knock on the skull with it, by token of my tripping over the door sill of the coach. Now, being somewhat stunned, I lay for a while under the hedge whither I had fallen and it was thus that this dust came upon me."

Here the viscount had another peg of ale. All this time I had stood without the circle of firelight, waiting until some one should take notice of me, and having a good stomach for a bit of ale myself, for the night was chill. But now that the viscount had started upon his tale none gave me any heed, being all too eager to hear one of the gentry talk to them, and being deeply interested for themselves, since the highwayman had been the chief interest about the fire before we had come in.

"At any rate," thinks I, "now that he has started upon his tale he must very soon come to that part that I played in it, and then I shall receive some attention."

"Having lain under the hedge for some time," continued the viscount, "I came to my senses just as the coach departed and as I lay hearkening, I heard one arise from the ditch and draw up to where the robber sat his horse.

" '——'s gates,' said a voice, 'here is a poor bag, for there was no one in the coach but a merchant and two farmers, but the merchant had considerable gold in his boots and a watch and a wig, all of which I lightened him of.'

" 'No,' said another voice, 'there were four. You have missed a very handsome and brave young man, a viscount, and I warrant you he hath a well-lined purse, for he has all the look of a man of high connections.'

" 'Why to be sure,' continued the first speaker. 'He attacked me and fell under the hedge; I had forgotten him.'

" 'Give me the sack,' said the second man, 'and let us haul out this cockerel from under the hedge.' "

The viscount then had another glass of wine, while I wondered with humming brain what this was all coming to. I had begun to have a feeling that it boded me no good. After the viscount's memory had been refreshed with the draft, he began again.

"The man on foot came to me where I lay and hauled me out by the heels, while the man on horseback watched. But they found that I was a bird of a different color. My pistol I discharged at the mounted man, who fled shrieking and I doubt not but what he is now dead, and the other I seized by the throat and demanded him, in King George's name, to yield, which he incontinently did—*and there he stands*."

THERE he pointed directly at me, and I, like the lackwit I was, could but drop my jaw at him and gasp, but when they moved at me to seize me I found voice.

"You lie in your throat!" I cried. "You —— hamstringing hound! It's not true! I was a passenger in the coach!"

"Search him then," cried the viscount, "see if he hath not the booty upon him!"

"He lies!" cried the merchant. "I never saw him before!"

"Un was not on coorch wi' us," agreed the farmers, nodding their heads vigorously.

"I rode in the rumble," I shouted at them. "My sword and valise are still there and I have papers that will soon enough prove who I am."

The viscount bit his lip at this and swore that I but sought to gain time, but the sergeant took up his stand at the door and the landlord rushed out into the yard and across to where the coach lay under the shed.

"There is a case of pistols and a sword inside," called the viscount after him. "Fetch them to me."

There were no further words until we heard the host's shoes clattering over the stones and he rushed in with the viscount's pistols under his arm and a sword in his hand. He came close to me and gave me a searching look, in which there was less of animosity than I would have expected, and turning to the company he announced—

"This 'ere is the honly sword in the coach, and there is naught in the rumble but bales of wool and 'ides."

"He is a thief!" shrieked the merchant. "Upon him! Search him! My watch and gold!"

"Hark forward! Hark forward! Tally-ho!" whooped the viscount, hounding them at me as if I were a fox and they the pack.

I resisted as best I might, but I am slightly built and light for a dragoon and the stable boys and hostlers having run in at the sound of the alert and the drawers and women folk from the kitchen lending a hand, the first leaping at me, and the second pulling my hair most grieviously, it was not long before they had me down, my pistol plucked from my belt and the merchant gleefully dragged the sack containing the gold from my pocket.

"It is true!" he cried, "it is true," and he chuckled and rubbed his hands together. "There is my clock and my seals, and all my gold untouched. O brave my lord, O bold young man!" And he fell on the viscount's neck.

"Has un gotten our horn snuff box?" asked the farmer that hung on my arm. "Zee if un has!"

None offered to find the snuff box, however, and the poor man had to be content with twisting my arm and very nearly having it out by the roots.

For my part, I was not silent during this time, but shouted the right of the story at the top of my lungs, now and again telling the viscount my opinion of him and what I should do to him when I should be released.

The word had meanwhile gotten forth that there had been a highwayman taken in the inn and numbers of the townspeople crowded in, armed with bills and forks and shouting till their throats were nigh to cracking. Many of them came close and peered at me to see if I was of their acquaintance and finding that I was not continued to howl and hoot.

Many of these honest citizens have traffic with the gentlemen of the road, giving them fire, food, and candle and helping them dispose of their stolen goods, but seeing that I was not one of their customers, they were nothing loath to see me hanged out of hand.

All the while that I was being hurried up and down and pushed and shoved, and every one reaching to take a buffet at me, I had noticed from time to time, when I could get my head clear, that the landlord stood on a bench a little apart regarding me fixedly, and once I could swear he made me a sign of encouragement. What this could mean since it had been he that had betrayed me by saying there was no sword or valise in the coach, I could in no wise make out. After a time he descended from his bench, and swinging a bung mallet, ordered the townspeople out, cursed the stable boys back to their kennel, and hurled the women from the room.

"Now then," he announced, looking around him, "let's 'ave 'im locked up for the night and we'll 'ave 'im before squire in the morning."

The men that hung to me had increased from two to twice that number or more, and at his suggestion they followed the host across the darkened yard, the whole of us moving at a shambling run and I heard them fumbling at the fastenings of a door and calling for a light.

At last there was the creaking of a hinge and I was hurled into a small, windowless room. The dim ray of a coach lanthorn held by one of the men showed me a row of musty great-coats and a great pile of saddles and harness in a corner. Then the door swung to and I was left in darkness.

At the first I had no thought but to curse and kick upon the door, but I soon found that I wasted my breath and made my foot sore, so I desisted and sat down on the pile of saddles to think what was best to be done.

This was a pleasant homecoming for a certainty. Here I was not a week in England, and in a fair way to be strangled for another's crime. The reaction of the excitement weakened me exceedingly. A grateful country, mine, indeed! Having wellnigh given up my life for her in Flanders, now that I was broken and fit for no more fighting, invalided home, landing on the shore almost penniless, the very people for whom I had fought were all for hanging me on the word of a scoundrel they had never seen before.

For the viscount's conduct it was easy enough to find a reason. He was a scoundrel and a cur, and my sudden appearance embarrassing him, he had taken this means of getting rid of me. The landlord, however, was different. As for saying that there was no baggage in the rumble, it might have been stolen by one of the hangers on. The rest of his actions were unexplainable: The whiteness of his face when he returned and his curious looks at me from the bench. Now that I thought of it, I could have sworn that his eyelid flickered at me.

I pulled down several of the old coats to cover me and what with weakness and the fatigue of the journey and the night's battle, I fell asleep, to be awakened by a chill blast across my face. To my surprize the door stood ajar and though it was still dark, I could hear cocks crowing lustily. The next instant a hand brushed my face and seized me by the shoulder.

"Come hout, sir, come hout!" panted a husky voice.

Still half asleep, I staggered out the door, which was at once clapped to behind me. A sword hilt was thrust into my hand—mine! It was mine, I would know it at ——'s mouth!

"I am very sorry, sir, if you have been inconvenienced," continued the voice, "but this is no place for a gentleman of the honest party. Here are all —— Tories. Your sword, sir, will give you away, and an hexpress has been through that you and your friends are about. Now, sir, to 'orse and be on your way before daylight."

I was by now fully awake and when the explanation came to me I could scarce stifle a laugh. England was, as I have said, fair torn in two between Stuart and Hanover. No man knew the true state of neighbors' politics and here this poor rogue, misled by the fact that an alarm had been sent out of the landing of the Jacobites, had taken me for one because of my French sword. The carrying of such a weapon would be cause enough for question, when the very cut of a man's wig would bring suspicion of espousing the Pretender's cause upon him.

Here the landlord appeared leading a horse, with my valise strapped to the saddle.

"Leave him at the Child and Boot," said he. "'E will be taken care of. Your honor will forgive me for not bringing in your sword? With that soldier there and all the rest, you would 'ave been lost hindeed. If I might make so bold, change your clothes and get another sword, for it will be a 'anging matter else."

I thanked the man as civilly as I could and belted on the sword. The horse was a sorry hack, I could tell by the feel of his backbone, but he would carry me to safety at least and if the man thought me a Jacobite, the more fool he.

"A stirrup cup, now!" cried the landlord, reaching me a mug and then filling one himself. He added, "The king's health!" at the same time swinging his arm over the horse trough, which is a trick these gentry have, it signifying "over the water," and they drink thus to their king over the water, who skulks in Italy behind a hedge of petticoats.

"King George, God bless him," said I, and slapping the crowbait's ribs, I clattered from the yard, leaving the poor wretch to put what construction he might upon my actions. It was a foolish thing to do and he might very well raise the hue and cry after me, and then he might not, for he would have his own part to explain.

As for me, a health to George, for he had taken the field with us at Dettingen and led us gallantly and well, a thing no king had done before for a long time, nor has any done it since.

So then, having a beast—one could scarce call it a horse—beneath me, and my sword on my thigh once more, I proceeded toward London and the sun rose up and lighted me on my way.

Before I had gone very far from the unhappy inn, I bethought me that if the landlord should have a change of heart—and it was very likely that he would, since I had refused to toast the Pretender—it would be easy to trace me by the crowbait that I bestrode, so shortly after day I turned him loose to go home or wander about the fields as he saw fit and hailed a great wagon that was passing laden with two families going up to London.

For a very slight sum they took me in and the rest of the day and the night I rode in the wagon, very sore with the jolting of it and with the crawling over me of the innumerable brats that were part of the cargo.

CHAPTER VI

OF MY POVERTY IN THE CITY

WE CAME into the city early in the morning of the following day. I had in mind offering my services to some gentleman going to the Indies or the Virginias, and with this in view I went down to the docks and spent the day there, but had my labor for my pains and when night fell I turned into the first street that opened in search of lodgings. I was fortunate to secure them in Water Lane, for five shillings the week and miserable enough they were, a room with no fire, but all that I could afford.

I spent after that a wretched week. It would seem that in all this great city with its thousands and thousands of people, there might be some place where a man with a knowledge of horses, a veteran of Dettingen and endowed with youth and health enough to walk about, could find employment.

I used to stand many a morning in Cheapside and watch the apprentices taking down the shutters of the drapers' and goldsmiths' and the haberdashers' shops, and think it ill that all these should have employment and I none. Then I would go through the Poultry to Lombard St. and so down Fish Hill to the waterside, and thence to Billingsgate, where the fishwives gathered to wait for the ringing of the high-water bell to go to Gravesend. This was the only amusement I had, watching them fight and I learned a number of new words from hearing them curse.

As the week advanced and my money grew less, I became desperate. Here were many people earning their daily bread and I was denied mine. I thought for a time of selling brooms or costards, or some of the simples that were cried about the streets, but the thought of a soldier, a dragoon no less, and a wounded veteran of the last campaign, going about London crying, "Brooms here! Buy my brooms!" or "Clove water, stomach water," was too much.

My clothes were of the cheapest to begin with and traveling in carts and sleeping in them, which I had to do to keep myself warm, had not improved them, so that they were in such state that no Jew in St. Mary Axe would give me a farthing for them.

Even the ragged boys that hung about the crossings with brooms to sweep them clear of mud and then demand a penny for the service, would take one look at me and never stir a hair's breadth. One of the imps went so far as to offer me his broom, crying that I had more need of a crossing to sweep than he.

It was upon the evening of the seventh day, after I had been to the King's Mews in search of employment and thence to St. James Park, that as I was passing a tavern a number of soldiers came out. One of these brushed roughly against me in passing and then turned to glare at me. Both he and I whooped loudly in concert, for I recognized Nick Dashbaugh, who had been with me in Flanders.

"Well, well!" he shouted. I never would have known you in that rig. What! Did you get safe away from the mob? You have had no time to tell me your luck since Dettingen. Do you know that the Deacon has grown into a cornetcy? We are giving his commission a wet tonight. —— my teeth, but you must come! On our way, now, move out, and you can tell me your story as we go."

In spite of my protests he dragged me off, and indeed I was not very loath, for I had had nothing to eat all day.

"It is not much of a story," I told him. "After the battle a number of us were out gleaning what we could do. We had gone down by the morass and I had found me a French officer, who had upon him some rich rings and a sum of money. After I had finished his affair, I was set upon by a party of horse. Perhaps they were stragglers, perhaps a detachment from the enemy rear guard, but I still believe to this day that they were Austrians.

"Well, whoever they were, I was cut down at the first onset and being left in the marsh, had a fever and was very near death. So I was invalided and discharged, because my lord Cumberland felt that I was no more use and so tossed me aside like an old shoe."

I then told them of my meeting with the viscount and of his treachery.

"A scurvy trick," remarked Dick. "But you come with us and you'll forget all your troubles. Then in the morning we can see what can be done."

"I suppose you got safely away from the riot. How did you make out after the loss of your recruit?"

"Why, we just took Justice Dawley, he fearing for his life, and recruited him."

"What became of my friend, the squire?"

"Ha, ha! Being a hearty fellow, though a little ripe, we plied him with liquor and recruited him, too."

"Well, where is this wet to be?" I asked him, when I had done laughing.

"At the Seven Moons," he replied, "in Gough Square."

"Good. Then we can stop at my lodging and I can get my sword. I have no craving to be abroad after nightfall and unarmed."

I left Dashbaugh sitting on the door sill while I climbed the stairs and belted on my Picinino which, with its silver-chased basket hilt, went very ill with the rest of me, and then went down and so to the Seven Moons.

When we were still some distance off we could hear a great tumult and when we entered the tap room, the room was so thick with tobacco that one could scarce see. They were roaring some catch and after a minute or two I could make out the words, those of a very famous one and a great favorite with us in Flanders.

"Fill the cup, Phillip,
And let us drink a drain.
Once or twice about the house
And end where we began."

It was sometime before the company perceived that we had entered and when they did, they welcomed us uproariously. The Deacon, in whose honor the wet was being held, was already upsee-freeze, or in other words, stiff drunk, and had been rolled into a corner, but the spirits of the rest were at their highest.

Now I never was any great man at the bowl, and since my wound I had no head at all, so as soon as I perceived that the greater part of the company were unknown to me, and that there was nothing to eat, I made up my mind to steal away from there as soon as possible.

THEY were drinking out of a huge mug that must have held several quarts, and which was pegged down the side with silver pegs. Every man in his turn must sink the liquor from one peg to the next and any one detected in sneaking was forced to take a double draft. It was quite easy to detect this last, for the company looked into the mug before each man drank and again after he finished, to be sure he had had his whole peg. After the fourth round they called upon me for a song and I gave them:

"It is a cold and stormy night,
I'm wetted to the skin
But I'll bear it with contentment
Until I reach the inn,
And then I'll have a merry time
With the landlord and his kin."

This was well liked and after the song was ended I managed to steal away, which I did the more easily as the company had detected Dashbaugh in sneaking and were pleasantly occupied in forcing a double draft down his unwilling throat.

When I came into the street, I had not the slightest idea of the hour. It was very cold, with a damp wind and a great promise of fog. I proceeded in the direction of Water Lane, halting now and again and resting my head against the bricks of a wall to cool my brow. I must have had more than I realized or else the drink had been of great potency, for my head was none of the lightest and I had a desire to burst into song.

It was after one of these pauses that I became conscious of a distant rumor, a kind of tumult, higher up the hill in back of me. I listened as best I might for the buzzing in my ears, but could hear nothing save the watchman in the next street crying, "Lanthorn and candle light here, maid, a light here," for the householders to hang out lanthorns to light the street.

As I was about to go on, I heard the noise again and nearer. Hoots and howls, frightened squeaking, and the crash of glass-breaking. A party of drunkards, doubtless, or one of those bands of young men that roam the streets after nightfall, outraging honest citizens and frightening housemaids into fits.

Whichever one it was I had no desire to meet them and I went off at my best pace, clearing the skirts of my coat from the Picinino, in case I should have use for it. What with my drunken head, or my ill luck, or my lack of direction, I had no sooner reached the foot of the street and was about to cross over to the next, than a chair accompanied by two linkboys turned the corner, and after it a crowd of men, shouting and hollooing.

Even as I watched, they overtook their quarry and were upon the chair with drawn swords. The linkboys and the chairmen took to their heels. I could hear a deal of swearing and the thumping of swords upon the chair roof and sides and very shortly they had the occupant out, he calling lustily for the watch, and they shouting with laughter.

Unfortunately there was a light there, a lanthorn that the householder at that corner had hung out and I had stopped directly under its light, so that some of the rascals must have seen me, for one cried out—

"Go fetch him here and let us sweat the two of them!"

At this two or three came over the way toward me with their swords in their hands and I lugged out the Picinino with a glorious *whing!* The three came to a halt at the sound and looked rather adrift, being surprized to find, not a poor shopkeeper, or middle-aged citizen, but a stern-visaged young man, with a naked broadsword glimmering in the lanthorn light.

"Ho!" they cried. "Blades here! He draws on us! Blades! Blades!"

At this the whole party left their prey on on the other side and rushed over toward me crying:

"He draws, does he? We'll draw him! Tip him the lion, tip him the lion! Here's a comb to be cut! We'll teach him swordplay!"

I set my back against the house and putting the Picinino in guard, considered them, while they formed a half circle about me.

Now I am no trouble hunter and certainly not a brawler, for as I have said, I am of slight build and light for a dragoon, riding as I do at scarce ten stone. But here was trouble thrust upon me and being in a manner of speaking, pot-valiant, I felt no fear of them, but rather a keen enjoyment.

Here was a band of young men, idlers and beaus for the most part, who thought themselves successors to the Scourers and Mohocs, very brave in attacking chairmen and linkboys, but rather given to pause at the sight of a sword that was made for killing and not for ornament.

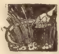
They stood about me, swearing, and calling to each other to close in and settle the matter, but none dared to do more than to point the brad awl he called a sword at me. So while they stood there of two minds, whether to close with me or let me alone and go after easier game, I stepped quickly forward and had my steel into one of them, halfway to the hilt. He went down with a sobbing gasp and the rest of them gave back a little.

Then with a shout two or three surged at me, crying to the others to fall on. One's sword I shattered with a parade, the other had an inch or two of the Picinino in his arm and fled, giving tongue like a kicked pup. I advanced again, making the broadsword glitter like a tongue of lightning and the rest of them took their heels and fled down the street.

I bent down to examine the man that I had let my sword into and as I stooped, my foot slipped in his blood and I fell, or that moment had been my last. The third man of those three that had rushed at me had lurked in the shadows and when I bent over he had stepped out and thrust at me, and but for my slipping would have spitted me. I went for him.

"By Jonah's whale!" he cried. "I'll slit your crop like a capon's!"

Then neither spoke again, but fell to with our tucks and thirsted for the other's blood.



THE other man, whose voice and face, half shadowed by his hat as it was, I could have sworn I recognized, was no mean antagonist. He had a light sword and stuck to the lower guard, attacking me with great vigor. A broadsword is no weapon for that kind of fighting, being a sword for different kind of work. Indeed, those who are masters of it use a dagger to do their parrying, using the sword to thrust only.

Howbeit, I did what I could, skipping about and hacking at him whenever chance offered, but with the weight of the Picinino and the weakness from my recent wound, and the fact that I had eaten none too heartily the past week or so, I began to lose strength rapidly.

The form of the other man began to blur before my eyes, there was a taste of blood in my mouth and it seemed that I could not bear the weight of my sword another instant, much less parry a thrust with it.

My antagonist, feeling me growing weaker, pressed his advantage and so fierce was his attack and feeble my resistance that I expected every instant to feel his sword questing among my ribs. I could see his teeth gleaming in a smile of triumph. He made a strong thrust at me, but the darkness hindered him and he missed, even though I made no attempt to parry it.

This was my salvation for, having my sword still advanced while he was recovering from the thrust, I summoned what last strength I had and cut down at his head. He parried just too late, but the stroke was so weak on my part that he managed to turn the blade, so that the flat and not the edge struck him.

As it was, his hat was flattened and he went to his knees like a pole-axed bull. I at once set my foot upon his sword and resting on the Picinino, tried to recover my breath. He got back his scattered wits at about the time that I did my wind and tried to jerk his sword from under my foot.

"—— you!" he cried. "You have killed my best friend. I'll have your heart for that, by ——!"

"Drop it!" I ordered, and shifting my foot quickly from the blade, I stamped on his fingers, so that he dropped the sword and came for me with his bare hands. I retreated, menacing him with my sword and I began to fear that I should have to kill him after all, but he suddenly stopped and sitting down on the steps of a house, began to weep bitterly.

"Come," said I, "stop your snotting and if you will lend a hand, we'll see if we can not have a surgeon for your friend. Come back, now, to the light and we'll see what can be done!"

"Yes," he agreed, "let's go back; he may not be dead. By the bones of Timothy, but this is a sad night's work!"

We went back to where the man that I had thrust through lay in the ditch and I picked up the two swords and cast them into the sewer. I went up the street a little way and looked about me and then went back to where the other man was loosening the wounded man's clothing.

"This is the foot of Fetter Lane," said I, "and my lodgings are but a little way off, so let's carry him there and then we can do what may be necessary. At any rate, we can not stay here to be taken by the watch and I think there is some kind of a reward for Mohocs or any one caught disturbing the peace of the city after nightfall."

"I know not what to do," cried the other man, chewing his fingers. "I know not what way to turn."

"Catch hold of his heels!" I directed, "and I will show you the turnings. It is but a step down Fleet street and then we will have him safe enough."

So my antagonist took hold of his friend's heels and I his head and we started on, carrying him between us.

I could not at that time explain, nor have I been able to since, why I should befriend two rufflers and peace-breakers, such as these, who but a moment before were doing their best to kill me. I think perhaps my guiding angel had a hand in it, for certain it was that this night's events were to be the turning point in my fortunes, although I did not know it for yet a long while.

Presently we were come to my door and had the wounded man up the stairs. If any one heard the noise of us, they would only think we were late revelers going to bed and the sight of two men carrying a third was a common enough one. We laid the wounded man on the mattress and I struck flint and steel and lighted a candle.

"Now then," I said, "let us get this damp out of our bones with a little nip," and I reached out a bottle of wine that I had, in which there was about the width of three fingers of liquid. The other man looked up at me and the rays of the candle fell full on his face. It was my rascal, my double-dealer, my split-tongued liar, my viscount.

For the space of half a dozen heart-beats I looked at him, but I had made no mistake and I only wondered that I had not discovered him before from the tones of his voice, his strange oaths, and his habit of chewing upon his fingers when in perplexity. Then I stepped softly to the door and shot the bolt.

"Now, my fine viscount," quoth I, turning about, "I have a score to settle with you that has lacked payment over long."

MY ANTAGONIST started at this like a spurred horse. He gazed intently into my stern face for a moment and then throwing himself into my one chair, roared with laughter.

"By the head of John!" he cried, "if it is not the gloomy dragoon! Why, this is better than a play!" Here he went off into another gale.

"Come," I said, "your laughter is a little out of place. We have yet your friend to attend to, after which I know a man who would do well to say his prayers."

At the mention of the wounded man, the viscount sobered instantly and with the greatest concern he caught up the candle and held it closely to his friend's face.

"Come here," he said to me, his features working piteously. "I fear—I fear he is gone!"

I took down a bit of mirror that I had and held it before the wounded man's mouth. It came away clear. I lifted one of his hands and the chill of death was upon it. I felt a little sick at this, but it had been the man's own folly that had brought it upon him and my greatest care now was how we might dispose of the body.

"Is he dead?" asked the viscount, with tears in his eyes. I nodded, whereat the other burst into weeping.

"Here," thought I, "there are at least some tender feelings in this man after all."

It was hardly the time to call him to account for his betrayal of me at the inn, now that I had killed his dearest friend, his brother perhaps. It might even be a good thing to cry quits, and at that the balance would be in my favor.

"Enough," I said at last. "Dry up your tears and be a man, if that is possible. Your friend is dead and all your groaning will not bring him back. If you cared as much for him as all that, you should not have suffered him to scour about the streets and put himself in danger of being run through by some honest citizen."

"I weep not for him," replied the viscount, "but for myself, for that man was to have been meat and drink to me the next twelve month."

This remark fairly took the wind from me. I looked about for a place to rest, for my knees shook under me, but there was none other than the bed, which the dead man took up, and the chair in which the viscount sat. Finally I took my dragoon's valise and putting it on the floor, sat down on it, with my back against the door and the Picinino across my knees.

The room was bitter cold and the candle guttered and swayed in the draft from the crazy window, but though every bone in me cried out, and my eyelids were forever drooping, I resolved that I would have some sense and satisfaction out of this blubbering viscount, cost what it might. Two bodies could be dumped into the Thames as easily as one. He began, however, to speak without further urging from me.

"I owe you an explanation, indeed, and an apology," he began. "I am a viscount and the head of my house, but that is all it amounts to. The entail of my estate was broken up before I was born and what with gaming and wine and women, and an unfortunate venture by my elder brother with the Earl of Derwentwater, when I came to my majority and the title, there was nothing to support either with. My poor father, in an effort to restore his fortunes, married a second time, the daughter of a London ship owner.

"Ill fortune," cried the viscount bitterly, "has dogged the footsteps of my house for generations! My stepmother's father, as soon as the marriage had taken place, proceeded to lose all his money, so that my poor father was again poverty-stricken and straightway gave up the ghost. I can not blame him the slightest. He had a posthumous child, a daughter, and the shipowner was mean enough to settle all that was left of his fortune upon her. She lives here in London and gives me a little aid now and then. She is a girl of most disgusting virtue and makes me promise that I will not spend at the gaming table any of the money she is so niggardly with."

"Surely an uplifting account," I observed. "But what has all this to do with me? I am not concerned with the wreck of your house nor your brother who went out with the Earl of Derwentwater and was probably knocked in the head with all the rest of that rebel crew."

"Ah," said the viscount, giving a little moan and rolling his eyes, "if that rebellion had only succeeded, I might have been made a duke."

"Be —— to you and your dukes," I cried, rising. "What of this dead man bleeding all over my floor? What of my five hundred pounds and a worthless bond? What of a lying cur that put my neck in the shadow of a rope not a fortnight since?"

To my surprize the viscount made a complete change of front. He drew back his chair and rose with a quiet dignity.

"Sir," said he through his teeth, "you are armed and I am not. I have lost my sword and you have me at your mercy, but if you will loan me a weapon I will be in a fair way to make you eat your words. I am no man to take the lie in my teeth without satisfaction."

"I am not here to bandy words with you," I replied, "nor must you forget that it is I that am asking satisfaction. Go on with your story and bring it to an early end."

"Well, then, this man," pointing to the form on the couch, "was my school fellow. He was an orphan, but his mother's brother had taken upon himself the schooling of him.

Money he had, and horses and a man or two. This uncle of his lived in the American colonies and must have been a man of great wealth, to judge by the allowance his nephew had.

"Now then, my friend comes up to London to live and very shortly the name of the honorable George Brockhurst, there he lies—" nodding toward the bed—"became well known as a reckless plunger, both at the tables and with the fair sex. In the midst of this comes a letter to me where I am biting my nails in Hanau, saying that word has come that the uncle is dead and the Honorable George is sole heir and would I care to make the journey to the colonies with him to claim his estate.

"He was my old schoolfellow and playmate, you see and, moreover, he owed me upward of two thousand pounds that I had diced from him from time to time. I applied for leave, but could get none, and having no one at home to plead for me, I was like to stay in Germany and so lose this golden opportunity."

"I had heard that you had so many debtors they would not trust you out of their sight!" I interjected.

"Well, perhaps so," said he, "no matter. To continue: Your worthy doctor had a system of getting men away, but he must have payment first, for the Head Passage Cull does no business on tick, and I had no money. He proposed to me that I join a mission that was going shortly to England from the court of Young Stuart in Italy, which mission was to pass through Hanau, to have a look at the state of King George's army.

"There being no other way for me to get to England, I agreed. At this time he mentioned cutting your throat and that matter was cleared, as you know. You being so generous as to make me a loan there was no need of being a Jacobite, so I was quit of them and had no more to do with them."

"Why then did they pursue you so thirstily? They hunger for your blood, my buck!"

HE CHANGED color a bit and moved about nervously.

"Ah, well, they have little reason. They provided me with a passport that took a good fortnight and much money to get, and I did not return it to them, and moreover I had some knowledge of their plans."

"And so betrayed them to the Norfolk Coast Guard!"

"What would you," he cried, "that I should let them land in peace and come whooping into England to cut my throat and overturn the government? How do you know all this? Did they give you passage in my place? I warrant you they did by your sober face. Well, my gallant galloper, your neck is in the shadow of the scaffold if you came into England in that company!"

"Not on your word," I retorted. "There breathes no man so near to death as the viscount of Barnet at this minute. Say on, now!"

"Well, there is not much more to say, save that I intended to redeem my bond from this man's funds and I really had an estate to secure, even if it was in America and not in England. But it is all one now, by your unlucky sword, and so I think you have your revenge of me after all."

"But how of betraying me at the inn with such a —— false currish lie as you put upon me there? And moreover when you rode away so swiftly from me in Flanders, you lifted my purse, which was poor enough return for the good I had done you."

"I lifted your purse? You rave! I did no such thing! Your purse indeed! Had I robbed you would I have come back to that inn-yard and lifted you on a horse and put my neck in danger, having gotten safely away once? Could you not lose it? Could not any horse tender or turn spit in the inn have gone through you while you lay there like one dead? And you put the blame on me!"

"Well, why did you not wait for me at Williamstadt?"

"I waited, man, as long as I could! I must to England! Why, this man was on the eve of sailing, as I thought. I waited and when you were a week overdue, I took ship, because there was little chance of getting another for some time."

"Umph!" I grunted. "Smooth enough, but your words lack the strength of truth. Where is my money?"

"The half that you gave me in Hanau I expended in getting to England. I was again out of money and coming down to London where the Honorable George awaited me impatiently. So it was that the unfortunate affair of the inn occurred. Wait!—holding up his hand, for I was stirring impatiently—"I lacked funds for clothes and to make the appearance that would be fitting. I had struck up an acquaintance with my honest merchant in the coach and it was fast ripening into friendship when the affair of the highwayman took place. Was it not an act of Providence? It was the one thing I lacked to settle me firmly with Old Moneybags, to restore his pilfered gold. You see," he said, smiling upon me with an open countenance, "he would be the more likely to make me a small loan, being in my debt, as it were."

"And so I was the stepping-stone to favor with the merchant, even though it cost me my neck!"

The viscount laughed a trifle uneasily.

"Nonsense! I would have had you freed next day. I would not have let any harm come to you. As it was, when the landlord awakened the entire inn with shrieking that you had escaped and stolen his horse, it was I that set them upon the wrong track by telling them that you would make for the coast instead of London.

"But now," he continued, "it is all at an end. I think we may cry quits indeed. I made you some slight inconvenience, but you have made me much more, for I have now no means of livelihood, nor the wherewithal to get me home again."

"How am I to know that this is not made of whole cloth and that you never saw this man before tonight?"

The viscount stepped over to the dead man and thrusting his hand into his bosom, drew out a leathern portfolio. This he put down upon the chair and taking a handkerchief from his skirt pocket, wiped the blood from the leather. Then he opened the portfolio and drew out a packet of papers bound with red tape.

"He always carried these with him,' said the viscount, "lest they be stolen. It seems he was at some pains to collect them, so that there should be no slip up, for he said that there was not a soul in the colonies that knew him and that there must be no doubt of his identity.

"Here " continued the viscount, taking out a paper and extending it to me, "is the original letter from the agent in London that the uncle was dead and that George was the sole heir. Here is a scroll of the will, the original being in the colonies. Here is a scroll of the parish register where George was born and a letter from the solicitor to Mr. Huckins, in Boston, America, who is the custodian of the estate, that the bearer, whose signature appears above, is the Honorable George Brockhurst, nephew and heir of Matthew Tupper, gentleman, as per the inclosed papers."

The viscount looked at this last letter sadly, then slowly his eyes began to widen.

"Why burn my soul in ——!" he cried, "there is no signature at the top! The Honorable George hath not signed his name in the place provided."

He sat a moment in deep thought, while I nodded my head and yearned for sleep, for my windows were graying with the coming dawn. Suddenly the viscount looked me fixedly in the face.

"Who is to know," cried he, "but what I am the Honorable George Brockhurst? Here's the proof and I can sign my name there," and he waved the agent's letter under my nose. "Come, will you go to America with me and be my companion? If I win this estate, the half of it shall be yours. There, is not that a recompense? Is not that proof that I am your friend? It will make you rich for life!

The memory of what followed is somewhat dim to me. I was beside myself with fatigue and would have no further discussion of the matter until I had had some sleep, so telling the viscount to make himself comfortable on the floor, I went outside on the landing and locked him in.

I knew he would not steal away, for as long as I was alive I would be in possession of his secret and have the means of ruining his project, but I had no desire to sleep in the same room with him, for I felt that he was not above slitting my throat with my own sword, directly as I was asleep.

I awakened later in the morning when the wench who took care of the lodgings came to make up the bed. I sent her about her business and she went, nothing loath to get out of some work. Then I aroused the viscount and we discussed the matter again. Finally I told him he must keep watch by the body until nightfall and that none must enter the room and that upon my return he should have his answer.

I went to the inn where Dashbaugh's party were billeted to see what he might have to offer in the way of suggestion for a livelihood, but he was abroad and no one knew when he would return. I found that I had but one shilling left and my lodging to pay on the morrow, so I decided that I had best go to the Devil in Temple Bar and have a bit to eat, for I had not broken my fast since the day before.

"Go to the ——, indeed," I thought. "A very happy jest."

As I went in I glanced up at the sign, which is that of the devil pulling St. Dunstan's nose—the church of St. Dunstan being opposite—and I thought that that was the way of it everywhere; that wrong triumphed and honor was made a mock of.

So, since I had no money and would be in the street tomorrow without a roof to cover me and no prospect of honorable employment, I decided that I would go to America with the viscount for the food and shelter it would give me, but as for the estate, I would have none of it. I knew him now for what he was, and would have my eye upon him. He that would cry out upon me at this, let him be alone and friendless in a great city, with winter coming on, and see how long his moral courage will hold out.

WHEN I had come back to my garret, I found the door open and the viscount gone and with him the body of the dead man. There was no blood upon the bed, beyond a few spots here and there, but there was a deal upon the floor and this I made shift to clean up with an old shirt. While I was about this matter, there was a great clattering up the stair and the viscount rushed in.

"Ha!" he cried, "we are in luck indeed. Well, and what is your answer, noble dragoon?"

"Who is to pay the expense of this venture?"

"Why, that we must discover," said he, wrinkling his brow, "but I have two or three ways that it may be done. That indeed is the slightest trouble. Passage has already been engaged and paid for by the Honorable George's agent, to whom I am known, thank God. It remains to keep him away from us till the ship sails. The captain of the vessel but knows that the Honorable George Brockhurst and a companion are to sail with him and if I can find out the name of the ship and where she lies, we may foil the agent in some manner."

"Where is the body,"

"Neatly done!" cried the viscount. "A neat trick, if I do say so. I stepped out some time since to have a dram to steady my nerves. Who should I meet but an old acquaintance of mine, a student of surgery. I whispered him that I knew of a good subject and he, dragging me to a nearby tap where there were three or four more of his persuasion, they made up a purse between them, and very shortly came with a hamper and cart and relieved us of the Honorable George and we are now five pounds the richer. Here—" and he tendered me some coins—"Here is your share, for we are to go half and half in everything!"

"I thank you for your generous offer—" I was really quite smitten to the heart by it—"but I will have no blood money. A moment ago you were sobbing that I killed your best friend and now you sell his corpse to a body-snatcher!"

"As you please," he said, whistling. "He is dead and we might as well have some profit by his demise. The slavey here had her eye to a crack of the door when we were taking him out, but I gave her a kiss and a crown, so we need fear nothing on that score. But come, let us out of this hole, for I have a pleasanter place in Pall Mall, where I lived with the late lamented, so let us begone to it."

As we went down the stairs he objected to the Picinino, saying that I would draw attention to us, wearing that great sword of French make about, but I told him that there was no way of concealing it and that I would not go without it, so he held his peace.

That night we lay in the Honorable George Brockhurst's lodgings in St. Albans Street. The next day the viscount was up betimes and cried that it would be a busy day. It seems that the Honorable George had been planning to sail within the week.

"Now, then," I asked the viscount, "did he imperil his liberty and even his life by running about the streets with all that ribald crew?"

"It was a little farewell," said the viscount. "Brockhurst and I had been to the Red Lion in Chick Lane and were coming home very friendly when we met some men at the head of Fetter Lane with whom the Honorable George had acquaintance. We had a rouse or two in one of the taverns and then the company suggested that we break a few lanthorns and give the sweat to an apprentice or two, to teach them to stay indoors at unseemly hours.

"The sweat, you know," he continued, looking at me from the corner of his eye, "is given by surrounding the victim and pricking him in that part of his body that presents the best target. Naturally he will turn away from the sword point, thus presenting the target to another member of the circle."

"I dare say it is a very delightful thing to undergo, but will not these gay companions make some inquiry regarding the Honorable George's fate?"

"Not they. There would be too much explaining of their own part in the night's doings required. And then they ran away when Brockhurst was struck down, which would be a hard thing to tell about."

We were somewhat concerned with an outfit for me, since the viscount wanted the Honorable George's clothes for himself and he had no extras of his own. I possessed the clothes I stood up in and a change of linen, but finally we found an old one of the Honorable George's that fitted me none too well and with that I had to be content.

"Why, then," cried the viscount, "the name of our ship is the *Gull* and we must be about finding her or we are unmade."

So we set forth and asked the watermen about Whitehall Stairs if they knew of the *Gull*.

"That I do, your washups!" howled one. "She lies at Redriff. I knows 'er. A liddle ship she be, for the colonies."

"That's the one," said the viscount, and after some haggling about the fare, for the waterman said it was a longish pull, we took into the boat and were rowed to where the *Gull* lay.

THE *Gull* was, as the waterman had said, a "liddle" ship, scarce larger than the lugger that had brought me from France. She had a castle on the after part of her and another one, not so high, on the fore, but she seemed a small craft to brave the voyage to the Americas. However, upon the waterman's crying out, some men with seamen's caps on their heads looked over the rail and presently let down a ladder to us, by which we went into the ship.

After we had stood for some time, sniffing the fearful stench of tar and rope grease and other noisome things, a man came to us from where they were nailing the covers on the holes in the deck through which the cargo is stored, and civilly inquired our business.

I am the Honorable George Brockhurst," said the viscount, "and have engaged passage to the Americas in this vessel."

"Oh, yes," said the sailor, making a curious motion with his knuckle at his forelock. "Would you care to see your berths?"

"We would," said the viscount.

"Is your baggage in the boat?"

"Baggage in the boat! Why, no! Did you expect us to bring our baggage now?"

"It were best that you bring it aboard today and come yourselves, sirs, for we expect to be dropping down river this time tomorrow."

The viscount was considerably taken aback at this, but he recovered and directed the sailor to show us our berths. These proved to be two shelves, one above the other, in a damp, dark room under the after part of the ship.

"Are you certain that these are the right ones?" asked the viscount, wrinkling his nose at the evil smell of the place.

"Aye!" said the sailor, "for here is the name chalked on the door." And he showed us the name of Brockhurst with a figure 2 beneath it, on the narrow door.

"Enough," said the viscount. "Let us make what speed we may to St. Albans Street and have our baggage on board."

So we went over the side again and back up the river, the viscount saying never a word, but chewing his fingers all the way, so I could see that he was upset in mind.

"There was dirt planned to be done some one," the viscount announced when we were back in the room once more, "for I did not know that we were to sail for a week yet. I had no outfit for this venture whatsoever. I can now use Brockhurst's, but we will have no time to supply you with one. Have you any money at all?"

"Not a groat," I replied sadly enough.

Here the viscount fell to chewing his fingers again and beat his brow.

"Did not the dead man have some money here?"

"Why to be sure!" cried the viscount, leaping up. "He discharged his man servant the day before yesterday and he paid him his wages in this very room. He kept the money in here."

He crossed the room to a small desk or secretary that stood there, through the drawers and cabinets of which he went like a terrior after a bone. He turned about with a rather white face.

"There is no money there," he said. "It must be somewhere; he would not go on a journey like this without money."

"Perhaps he intended to get an advance from the agent. Perhaps he carried it about with him. Did you search his clothes before they took him away?"

The viscount gave a loud shriek when I had finished and began to curse and to swear in a manner such as I had rarely heard, even in the army.

"To be sure," he said at last. "He had it on him and I never thought to go through him. You were there. Why didn't you search his pockets?"

"I am not in the habit of robbing the men I kill," I answered.

The viscount turned to me in one of those sudden changes of character that I was to marvel at during the coming months.

"Listen," said he, "you be ——. If you are going in with me to steal an estate from a man you have murdered, let us have none of this sanctimonious attitude of yours. I picked you out of the gutter and am in a fair way to make you rich for life, so I want no turning up of noses. If you are with me in this, well and good, if not, there is the door and you may pack yourself off at once!"

I had to laugh.

"Good enough," I said. "Good enough. I was wrong. I can see that you and I will get on famously. After this I make no more comments."

The viscount, however, was back in his former mood, tugging at his hair and wringing his hands.

"I have it!" he cried at last. "Wait for me here. Cord up some of this luggage, will you? I'll be back before dark and then we can go to the Mermaid and have some supper and so to the ship."

Then he clapped his hat on his head and went out.

He had been gone about an hour and I had corded up two chests and was at work on a third, when the door which had been unlocked, opened suddenly and a woman entered, without so much as "by your leave." She had on a dress of some coarse gray stuff and a mob cap, from under which her black hair escaped in waving strands. She had a very hard countenance, upon which there were traces of ancient beauty. Her fingers were heavily jeweled, and so were her ears, and she had a fan of feathers in her hand.

"So!" she began, after a long silence. "I thought as much! And so my gallant gentleman had been skulking off these last two or three days and thinks he will get safely away with a quarter's rent in his pocket! 'I will not leave for a fortnight,' says he, and in two days he is gone and his baggage corded up. And who might you be?" she asked, peering sharply at me.

"I am Mr. Brockhurst's companion," I told her. I nearly said the viscount Barnet's, but checked myself in time.

"Oh, you are! I see you are not above wearing his old clothes!" referring to the suit I had on, which was indeed one of the Honorable George's old ones. I made her no reply.

"Will your master be back shortly?" she asked after a while.

"I do not know," I replied.

"Well," she remarked, "do you know where he is?"

"No," I answered roughly enough, and went on with cording the chest.

"I shall wait for his return," she decided. "I have a crow to pick with him and it may as well be done now as any time. I have not kept these lodgings for ten years without meeting a few of his kidney. I will have my rent, do you hear?"

I paid no attention and the woman began to move about the room.

"Look!" she cried, "at my fine bed, all chipped and scarred!"

The Honorable George had indeed broken the footboard badly, probably by lying down on the bed and catching the heel of his boot on it, to draw the boot off his leg. I suppose he had thrown his bootjack at his servant and was too drunk to look for it again.

"See this table, where they have left their dirty liquor and never offered me so much as the smell of the cork! And tobacco on my rugs! I tell you fifty pound would not repay the damage to this room. Look at that!"

She pointed to where some one had dug the wall with a sword, probably in illustrating the story of a street brawl or in doing exercise.

"And does he think he will get away without paying my score? Does he? I'll have it out of that ugly face of his first!"

And she hooked her fingers most threateningly. After a while she began another assault, this time by wheedling me.

"Tell me, lad," she began presently, "does he keep any of his money in the room? In that desk, perhaps?" And she leered at me.

"You may look for all of me," I told her, knowing full well that there was none there.

She proceeded at once to hunt the drawers but found nothing other than some scented notes, which she sniffed at and then read with every appearance of a lively interest. Then she came back and tried again.

"Do you think," she began, sitting on the chest which I had uncorded and corded a dozen times for something to do, "that your master will be back before supper?"

"I have no idea," I replied, and leaving her, went over to the window. She followed at once and coming closely up to me asked softly, "You are not accustomed to the company of a lady such as I am, or you would be more civil."

"No," said I, turning away from the heavy scent she had upon her, "I have not been in Shoreditch these three years."

Fool that I was to bait a woman of her type! She gave a wild shriek and the fire flew from her eyes.

"—— you!" she cried. "You baboon's foundling! I'll kill you for that!"

And she was upon me, clawing and spitting like a cat, so that I was forced to put her out the door and a hard enough time I had doing it. Once she was in the passage, she fell to kicking the panels and screeching more oaths than one would hear in a long day's walk through the darkest parts of London. Finally she went downstairs and I heard the bang of the street door after her.

I WAS breathing easily again when the viscount returned and hammered on the locked door.

"Why the bolting and barring?" he inquired.

I told him of my caller.

"Oh, that was Nell," he said in disgust. "She was a famous beauty once and some lord gave her this house and set her up as a lodging house keeper to salve his conscience and keep her quiet concerning a love affair of theirs."

Then he began again.

"I had an idea that that was the reason for Brockhurst telling every one we would not sail for a sennight. He was to beat his quarter's rent, and —— knows how many tradesmen's bills, by nipping out without saying a word to any one. There is, indeed, no time to lose. You fool, to insult her like that! She has probably gone for the bailiffs and if we do not haste out of here, we are likely to come no nearer our ship than the Fleet." Here he laughed at his own joke. "I doubt not that Brockhurst owed every tailor and wig-maker in London. Now then, with those chests. I have a man below with a cart to carry them to the Stairs."

But before we could so much as raise one chest from the floor, we heard a woman's step on the stair and the door slammed open and banged against the wall.

I looked up, prepared to meet the lady Nell once more, but instead beheld a vision of loveliness that quite took my breath away. Here was a dainty maid, perhaps eighteen, with a profusion of golden curls and eyes of such a blue as took the breath. Men of the mounted forces are more appreciative of beauty in women, I think, being accustomed to the appraising of horses by their appearance, and here was as fine a young filly as one could want, with a conformation that defied comparison.

"Why Maud Burkie!" cried the viscount. "What are you doing here? And if that isn't Doris! Come in, Doris dear."

The vision came in, her nose in the air, followed by a gigantic female with shoulders like the trunnions of a gun and mustaches that would do credit to a grenadier.

"Ye needna 'dear' me," muttered the grenadier woman, "for I ha' known you ower long for the wastrel ye are."

"I might ask what you are doing here, my dear viscount," said the blue-eyed lady.

"Why I am—or have been—living with the Honorable George, and this gentleman—" nodding at me—"is Hugh Bancroft, a friend of mine, whom I crave leave to present. Miss Maud Burkie."

She acknowledged the introduction with a scarcely perceptible curtsy, but smiled at me very winningly.

"You have made a small mistake," she said to the viscount, still showing her white teeth. "I am not Miss Maud Burkie any longer, but have taken another name."

"Indeed!" cried the viscount. "Pray accept my most heartfelt wishes for all the happiness this world affords. And who might the lucky man be?"

"Ah," said the lady, "I hesitate to tell you, for I fear you will be angry."

"Not I!" exclaimed the viscount. "I lost all hopes of you years ago."

"It is not that," pouted the blue-eyed one. "But I fear that the news will put you to some inconvenience."

"Well, let's have it anyway."

"I would have you know," said the lady, casting her eyes to the ground, "that I have been married to the Honorable George these seven months and that my name is not Miss Burkie, but Mrs. Brockhurst."

The clock ticked, wheels rattled from the street and the cry of a man selling brooms came faintly to us. Doris shifted her weight and I jumped at the creaking of the boards.

"Oh, this is a —— mess, a confounded mess, O God!" moaned the viscount. "Your husband never said anything to me of this marriage!"

"It was a secret affair," said she, "and I was to join him in London when he had found a home and then we were to make it known. But I was lonely and impatient and so came without waiting for a summons. When do you expect my husband?"

The viscount looked at me, but I had no help for him. I think the lady had some idea of the truth at that, for she grew very white.

"Tell me," she cried, "is anything amiss?"

"No," said the viscount.

"Is my husband ill?"

"He is dead!" I cried, and could have bitten off my tongue.

The lady shrieked and Doris leaped to her side and cursed me most heartily in her Scotch tongue, like a true grenadier.

"Where is he buried?" cried the lady.

"He was drowned," blurted the viscount. "A boat was overset and his body was never found."

The facile liar!

At that the poor girl wilted like a rose in the heat and Doris bore her away and in a short time we heard a coach departing.

"Let us hurry, in ——'s name," cried the viscount, "for she will be back and want the details and the —— will be to pay. I come of a border family," he moaned, "and with trying to sit on two stools since the days of Bruce they have many times fallen between them, but I doubt if any member of my house has been cursed with ill luck equal to mine.

"There," he panted, "now let's be quick with these chests, and once we are on shipboard we can laugh at them all."

We picked up the chest and hurried it downstairs, to where a man was waiting with a barrow. There were three of the chests and when we were on the stairs with the last one, there was a noise of voices at the door, and a woman's over all of them.

"It's Nell!" said the viscount sadly. "Now the fat is in the fire! Well, let's face her down."

IT WAS indeed Nell. The woman that had cursed me through the door had lost no time in her movements. She had with her two great hulking men, armed with knotty clubs, and she urged them in shrill tones to do their duty.

"Seize them!" she cried. "That's him! He'd do an honest woman out of a quarter's rent! Grab him! Catch hold there! There's law in England yet."

There was quite a crowd of idlers, boys and serving men, and all manner of hobbledehoys gathered about and Nell began to harangue these concerning her wrongs, to their great delight. One of the bailiffs stepped up to the viscount and civilly enough inquired if he were the Honorable George Brockhurst.

"No indeed," replied the viscount. "I am the viscount of Barnet and this is my companion, Captain Bancroft. This excellent lady is mistaken in our identity."

The bailiff fell back and begged his pardon, saying that he had an order for the delivery of the body of one George Brockhurst to the governor of the Fleet Prison. The viscount looked so lofty and unconcerned, smiling a little, and resting his hand upon a walking stick he had acquired with the fine suit he wore, that I thought he would awe them down and we should get safely away. But as he raised his hand in a signal to the man to proceed with the cart, I noticed a sour-faced man shoving his way through the crowd.

"Hold all!" cried this one. "Bailiff, seize this man!"

"I am not Mr. Brockhurst," said the viscount, smiling.

"That's as it may be," answered the sour-faced man, "but I made that suit and I have not yet been paid for it nor for this one either," pointing to me. "Seize them both!"

"Aye," cried Nell. "Have at them! They owe me for a quarter's rent! Ho! thieves, thieves!" The crowd cheered her thunderously.

"You shall smart for this," declared the viscount to the sour-faced man.

"I dare say," was the reply. "Meanwhile have them to the Fleet, both of them and that cartload of clothes to my house."

The sour-faced man produced a bundle of writs after he had spoken and handed them to one of the bailiffs. This one directed the driver to go somewhere with our chests and then, taking the viscount by the arm, started off with him, leaving his companion to follow with me.

The one that had the viscount required his sword of him, upon which the man that was with me asked me for mine and I had to yield up the Picinino to him. This seemed to produce a strange effect upon the crowd, who saw the sword plainly for the first time and divers of them remarked upon its pattern. Then, after a time, they stopped their jeering and numbers of them took themselves off, up alleys and down lanes, at the top of their speed.

The officers were taking us by the back streets to escape as much attention as possible, but the crowd about us kept growing larger and by the time we were come to the back of Covent Garden, it bid fair to be a mob. Then it was that I had some inkling of the reason for all this excitement, which could not be caused by seeing two debtors hauled to jail.

There was a man running about from one to another, pointing, calling, and waving his hand. I saw his face once or twice and knew him. It was the leader of the Jacobite party who had come with me to England. I knew his purpose, too. He would have both me and the viscount slain, and so have revenge on the one and be rid of the other. The crowd responded to his efforts.

"The one be'ind," they cried, pointing, "'e's a 'ard looker, 'e is! Lookit's Scots sword!"

"Aye, belike 'e's a wild 'Ighland man."

"Long life to King George!" howled some of them, "and be —— to all Jacobites!"

The crowd snarled its approval and a cloud of filth and vegetables flew through the air. The two bailiffs halted and conferred.

"We should ha' brought a coach," said one of them, "and all this would ha' been missed."

They debated about going into an inn and sending for help, for the mob was becoming more and more menacing and was commencing to bay in a most threatening manner. They firmly believed by now that we were Jacobites or French spies, or assassins of some kind and they thirsted for our blood.

Just at the moment when the mob was packed closest about us and we could see their dirty, snarling faces and smell the reek of the kennel and the stews and ditches where they denned, upon them, the viscount thrust his hand into his pocket and after a moment brought it out again.

"Catch!" he cried and flung a handful of coins in the air.

There was one tremendous roar from the mob, a host of dirty hands were thrust in air and then a wild scrambling began on the stones, all else forgotten at the sight of a little gold. I grasped the stratagem at once, nor needed the viscount's shout to spur me to action. The man that held me was overthrown and he and I fell to the pavement together, but I was up the first and wrenching my sword from his hands, was deep in the crowd before he was off his back.

I thought I should never get clear of them, for they were all fighting their way to the center, roaring and striking with their fists and paying me not the slightest heed. Finally I won through and having got clear of the skirts of the crowd, found the viscount and we both set off down the first street at the best speed we could muster.

When the roar of the riot had grown faint behind us, we slowed to a walk, twisting and turning to throw off pursuit. People glanced at us in curiosity, for the viscount was very torn and battered, and I doubt not but what I was in worse case, but none hindered us and finally we came to the river just at dusk and secured a boat to go down to the *Gull*.

CHAPTER VII

OF HOW WE PUT FORTH TO SEA AGAIN

THE night came on with a thick fog, so that when we were come aboard none noticed our tattered condition. We went at once into our berths and then the viscount sat him down on the sleeping shelf and covered his face with his hands.

"If ever," he moaned, "there was a more ill-omened venture, I do not know of it. Here we are for sea, our baggage lost, our clothes torn, and the hounds upon our trail. I tell you that confounded meat-ax of yours will have you hanged yet. And you must needs go out of your way to make an enemy of Nell, so that she has the bailiffs about our ears and sends off a boy to tell the tailors we are breaking cover.

"If you lie cold all across the ocean, you will have only yourself to thank, for if it had not been for your folly we would not have lost our baggage and all our bed covering. Oh, curse and confound and crush me!" he moaned. "I come of an ill-starred house and should expect no luck in this world."

"We are at liberty, though, and not in a debtors' prison," I reminded him.

"Nor are we out of the harbor yet. I might mention that we are somewhat poorer than when we left the house, and God he knows that we were poor enough then. I do not know how much I threw to that dirty rabble, but it was more than I could afford, I warrant you that."

"Our passage is paid for."

"To what end? To land us penniless in an unknown land, full of woods and wild savages."

"But there will be an estate to furnish us with food and what other things we need."

"Why so there will! I had never thought of that. Indeed I had forgotten it for the moment. Why so indeed! Come," he cried, all cheer and smiles once more, "things are not so bad after all. Cheer up, man!"

Since I was the only one who had been cheerful up to now, I thought he need not have made this last remark. By way of rebuke I mentioned the widow Brockhurst.

"Aha!" he laughed. "Never fret about her. I know her of old. Her husband is dead, her little romance is over, and she will fly away back to the north again and marry some other idiot. And so that fond fool married little Maud! He certainly pulled the wool over all our eyes. God be praised she came not a sennight sooner!"

He sat down again on the sleeping shelf.

"Now, then, touching our financial matters. Yesterday I went to see our friend the merchant, whom you will remember—" here he glanced under his lashes at me with a very impudent smirk—"we had some business with about a fortnight since. He remembered me, had me into his counting house, gave me a glass of very excellent wine, and rang for his man to throw another stick on the fire.

"I reminded him of what I had told him on the journey, for I had given him a full account of where I was going and for what purpose, save that at that time I expected to be the Honorable Brockhurst's companion, and not the Honorable Brockhurst himself. He said that he remembered and inquired as to the Honorable's state of health, which you may be sure I did not tell truthfully. Then I made the suggestion that he advance me a trifle. Solomon's wives! I could feel the ice freeze!

"He inquired why I do not apply to the Honorable George or to his agent, or why I did not bring sufficient funds for a voyage to America, where the greater part of the people go naked all the time. To all this I had no answer, of course, and he thereupon rang for his man again, not to throw a stick on the fire, but to throw me out, so I took my departure.

"I did, though, fire one parting shot. I told him that if I caught him on the heath again that I would have his heart of him. I think it was a hit, for he changed color. So we must battle our way across the wintry sea with nothing but the remnant of our income from the Honorable George's corpse to keep us until we come into our estate."

I was awakened in the morning by men's voices and a bumping against the side. The sun was up and reflected from the river on the roof of the berth with a quivering, shimmering light, running about like a will-o-the-wisp. I listened and found to my horror that there was a boat under the windows of the berth and men in her talking with others on the deck.

"So you are sure they are not aboard?" asked some one in the boat. "Make no mistake, my man, the giving of shelter to traitors is a hanging offense!"

"Un be not abooard, I tell 'e," cried some one on the deck. "Let Red Breast coom abooard, I'll warrant we'll show un soon enough!"

There was a sound of laughter from several throats at this and a chorus of cheery invitations to "Coom oop!" accompanied by a scattered thumping, by which I was led to believe that those on deck had clubs or staves and were pounding the rail with them.

I looked at the shelf where the viscount slept and discovered him wide awake, with beads of sweat upon his brow. He made me a sign to be silent and we listened a while longer to those in the boat threatening and those on deck jeering, and finally we heard the rattle of oars put out again and the thump and creak of them as the boat was rowed away.

The viscount was very gray about the chops.

"They are hunting us," he said with dry lips. "They must have soldiers after us, too. Did you hear him mention traitors?"

"There is nothing to fear," I assured him. "I am no traitor and the possession of a French sword does not make me one. It's an Italian sword by rights, anyway. I still have my papers, too."

Now all the time of our arrest and during and after the riot, I had kept my dragoon's valise, which I had worn about my shoulders by a strap. It was so obviously a piece of personal property, and of little value, being all chipped and cut with the usage of the campaigns, that the bailiffs had not troubled themselves to take it from me. In it was my discharge, and one or two letters that certain officers had seen fit to write from time to time regarding services that I had performed during the campaign. If any one thought me a traitor, he had but to read me these letters.

There came a rap at the door. I reached out and took hold of the Picinino and the viscount thrust his hand under his mattress, where he had a pistol.

"Come in," he called.

The door opened and a bearded man with very bright blue eyes entered.

"Good morning to you, sirs," he said. "I would advise you to lie quiet today and for so long as we shall be in the river. Some friends of yours were inquiring for you already."

"But really," I said, "we are innocent of the offense with which we are charged. It is not us they are after——"

A quick change flashed across the bearded man's face, a momentary brightening like a glimpse of the sun through winter's clouds.

"I ask no man his business," he said, peering at me under his heavy brows. "My owners tell me that passage is paid for such a one. I will carry him to his port if my ship lives. There may be a great to-do on land, but at sea the wind blows and calm falls and the tempest roars whether Stuart or Hanover, Catholic or Protestant sits on the throne. When passengers come aboard with swords like that—" pointing to the Picinino—"and no baggage, and their clothes showing signs of recent conflict, I advise them to stay below decks, even if boats full of officers have not been scouring the river since sun-up."

"Who are they seeking?" asked the viscount.

"A French spy and a certain Scotch viscount, who incited a crowd to riot and mobbed two of his Majesty's officers in the city yesterday."

"Are we sailing today?" I asked.

"No. We expected to, but there was a new consignment of goods, so we have had the hatches off and will be here for two or three more days. Lay low and you will have no trouble. I should think that once they discovered you had taken ship for the colonies, they would trouble you no longer."

He bade us good day after that, and went out.

"Aye," said the viscount, "if we were spies and traitors they would let us be, but since we are only poor debtors, they raise the hue and cry all up and down the Thames."

FOR three days we lay at our anchor, waiting, I suppose, for the new goods, but they never came. It was perishing cold, for the window of the berth had no glass, but was closed by a heavy wooden shutter. When the shutter was open, the wind came in and froze us and when it was closed, the fearful smell of the place was like to suffocate us. We had sent ashore for some bed covering, and the master had given us an old boat cloak and a moth-eaten greatcoat he had, and under these we lay and shivered.

We durst not go on deck except after nightfall, so during the day we lay on our shelves and shivered. It was more like a jail than anything I could imagine. Several times boats came to the ship's side and once people got out of them on deck and went into the great cabin, where we could hear them talking, the ship master's voice heavy and respectful, and some other persons, the tones of which we could scarce hear.

The dreariness of those three days I shall never forget, nor the cold nor the wet darkness of that hole in the bottom of the ship, where we lay. I think it was at this time that I began to dislike the viscount.

On the morning of the fourth day there

was a great running about overhead and a deal of shouting and singing. There was a rustling, whimpering noise along the ship's side and I leaped out of bed and opened the shutter. It was not yet day, but there was the first gray of daylight and a cold mist lay upon the water. We had set sail at last and were slipping down the river with the the tide.

Later in the morning, when we were well away from the city and there was but little shipping, the viscount and I went out to the deck. The sun was bright and warm, the clear cold air blew in our faces and our hearts leaped like those of uncaged birds. On either side of the river the fields stretched away, brown with the color of late autumn. We could see cottages and inns and the great houses of the gentry, set back among the trees of their parks and the little roads, like threads across the hills, with carts on them and maids waving their hands.

I turned to call the viscount's attention to something, I have forgotten now what it was, when I beheld him staring with slack jaw at something I could not see. I stepped to one side, so that I could see beyond the mast, and beheld two females coming out of the great cabin.

They were both wrapped in shawls, so that the identity of the smaller one would be hard to guess, but there was no mistaking the gigantic form of the second. It was the grenadier and there was little doubt that the other was the widow Brockhurst. Then the smaller one turned her face in our direction and we could see it was indeed she. When she perceived us and could recognize us under the outrageous garments that we wore, she came running toward us with a happy cry.

"Oh wonderful!" she cried. "What happy chance has brought you on this ship? Are you indeed going to the Americas? What good fortune is mine! Now I will not have to make that long, long voyage alone and arrive friendless in a strange land."

"Indeed! madam," said the viscount sourly. "And what takes you to America?"

She cast down her eyes at this and put her handkerchief to them.

"Now that my husband is dead," she said, with a catch in her speech, "I have nowhere to go, no friends, nor any means of livelihood. I purpose to go to my poor dead husband's uncle, who dear George said was a very wealthy man, and see if he will not make some provision for me in his household."

There was a silence after this and the masts creaked and ropes beat upon the sails and men in the forward part of the ship sang at their work. The viscount looked at me and I at him, and finally he turned without a word and went down into the berth.

"Why, what is wrong with him?" asked Mrs. Brockhurst, with her eyes wide with concern.

"Perhaps a touch of the sea," I said. "He had complained of it before."

"Indeed the motion of the ship is very unsettling," said she. "Tell me," she asked, turning toward the rail, "do you know the names of any of these villages we are passing?"

Then we stepped to the vessel's side and stayed in conversation for some little time, after which she took her departure and went back into the cabin.

Now I am no sailor. When we were come out into the Channel and felt the heave and pitch of the great waves, I became grievously ill and for a long time I lay helpless and prayed for death. The viscount was in little better case and lay groaning on his shelf all day long.

When I was a little recovered, I struggled on deck and would lie for a while looking out over that great waste of waters, or up at the bellying sails and wishing that I had never left England. There is no pleasure in a journey by sea, there is nothing to be seen day after day but the heaving billows, rolling and rolling from one horizon to the other and the wide, lonely sea, like a great moor, and the tiny ship in the midst of it, sailing into the sun's eye.

Our berth was cold and wet and foul, with the sound of the water rushing along the sides, tapping and muttering and whining, like a dog at a house door, yearning to come in. The sea is a pitiless thing, cold and gray, and what there is to bring men to seek their living upon it, and brave the beasts that dwell under it and the robbers that scour the top of it, I can not see.

We had been at sea the tenth day and I had had some talk with the widow Brockhurst now and again when we would meet upon the deck. The after part of the ship was high and stairs went up from the waist to a platform, or smaller deck, upon which the great cabin opened. From this platform there were yet more stairs that went to the poop, or after deck, where the helmsman stood, and the master of the ship walked. Our berth was under the platform and we went into it by a door under the stairs that went up from the waist.

Now the widow Brockhurst lived in the great cabin and we could tell when she came forth by hearing her step above our heads. At such times I found myself hurriedly getting up from my mattress and making haste to go out on deck.

During the course of our acquaintance, the guardsman always standing by, the widow informed me that she had been at her wits' end when she found that her husband was dead and that she had not known which way to turn. She had decided then to go to the colonies and upon her applying to merchants who did business in the Americas, she had found that there was a ship sailing that very next day.

She had gotten together all her money, pawned what little jewelry she had, made application to some of her friends and so raised money for the passage. She it was who had come aboard during the last day, that we had heard talking with the master of the ship.

ONE night I had come up to have a breath of air before going to bed and was greatly surprized to find the widow alone. There was a kind of bench that ran along the side of the ship, just beyond the door of the house and she was seated upon this, wrapped in a cloak. I went up to her and made some commonplace remarks and she made room for me on the bench.

"Doris is ill," she said, "and has taken to her bed, but I could not sleep and came out to look upon the stars awhile."

Indeed it was a beautiful night, with a great number of stars glittering in the cold sky, and a full moon, that danced its light upon the heaving sea. The sails bellied above us and the wind made soft music in the rigging, like distant violins. Of a truth, it was a night to upset steadier minds than mine.

We sat for some time in silence, so close that I could feel the warmth of her, and her hair blew across my cheek. The kettle drums began to pound in my breast and the trumpets to sound in my ear, like the stir of a camp awakening. I was minded of a night like this in Germany, when Dashbaugh and I had walked up and down the camp, looking across the plains at the enemy's fires and harkening to the sentinels calling the hour, and the horses stamping at their tethers. Something of this I must have said aloud, for suddenly she turned to me.

"You were a soldier, were you not?" she breathed softly. "I might have known by your bearing. Tell me about it, won't you, please?"

I told her modestly enough that I had done some campaigning and had been wounded at Dettingen.

"Oh, were you at Dettingen?" she cried. "How well I remember that victory, how the beacons blazed and the bells rang at the news of it! And you were there!" Here she leaned against my shoulder in concern. "Were you hurt badly?"

I perforce told her all about the battle, of our bickerings with the Austrians, of the ditch and the morass, and of how the day went against us until our king, putting himself at the head of the army, led us upon the French with renewed vigor, so that the fortunes of the day were ours.

We sat there far into the night and then I went down to my berth with the trumpets playing in my ears and lay for a long time, while I thought over again the events of the night. Finally I went to sleep with the lightest heart I had had for many a long day. What an ass a man will make of himself, if a woman will but give him half a chance!

After that the voyage was much pleasanter. During the day the gigantic Doris was on deck, but she kept to her bed after dark, so that I had no obstacles in my headlong rush to destruction. It was the viscount who offered the first check. Ever since the widow had come aboard, he had kept to himself, scarce speaking to me at all and spending what little time he was above decks in the forepart of the ship, looking out over the sea and chewing his fingers.

There came, then, a raw, cold day, with a very gray sky and a black, hurrying sea beneath it. The motion of the ship was so severe that it was impossible to stand upright on the deck, so both the viscount and I remained in our berth. We had nothing to say to each other for a long time and at last the viscount rolled his eyes to me from where he lay on his shelf.

"Did it ever occur to you," said he sourly, "that it was your hand that made Mrs. Brockhurst a widow?"

Now there was a ship's lanthorn hung to a beam in the center of the berth and this was all the light we had, the shutter being closed against the leaping seas. This light swung back and forth with the motion of the ship, so that one moment our faces would be in the light and the next in shadow. The viscount spoke while my face was in the light, but the ship had swung the other way and it was in shadow before he had done, and he could not see if he had touched me on the raw or not.

"Well, what of that?" I asked him.

"Nothing. I but wondered if you ever thought of it when you were hanging about her with a face like a sick sheep."

"You're not jealous, are you?" I asked him pleasantly, whereat he ground his teeth and I could see his face work as the light swung.

"Listen," said he, "my bold dragoon. Do not forget that we go to seize the estate of one George Brockhurst and that I am he. This woman is George Brockhurst's widow, after the same estate. One of us is doomed to be disappointed and I do not intend that it shall be I."

"I am not interested," I said. "But I am a little curious to know how you can keep her from the estate, if she has her marriage lines to show."

"What do you suppose I have been thinking of all these long days that I have spent on this accursed ship, while you played the squire of dames? The thing is simple. I am the Honorable George Brockhurst and have the letters to prove it. If she has her lines with her, which I doubt, then I can but swear they are false. If she hath not her lines, then I will have an easy task."

"Ah, but she has them," said I, "and more than that, she has a number of letters from the Honorable George. She told me as much. She has brought them to show the rich uncle."

"Have you ever given thought to the fact that my merry Brockhurst never said a word to me of his marriage, nor had he told this Maud woman that he intended going to the colonies. How does it look? Either they were not married, or the Honorable George intended to desert her, which last I think the most likely. She probably got wind of it, and so came to London."

"That hound!" I muttered. "I think after all that I did a good deed by ridding the earth of him. As to what you say of making Mrs. Brockhurst a widow, I think I did her a favor. If she wants the estate, let her have it. We will have had our passage paid to a new land, where we may make a fresh start."

"No!" he roared. "By the head of John! No! She shall not have it! —— my soul, no!"

Then he chewed his fingers a while and muttered to himself. Finally I noticed his eyes glittering as the lanthorn swung to and fro.

"One death got me this estate." he said through his teeth, "another may keep it for me."

TO BE CONCLUDED

THE OLD SALOON

by Bill Adams

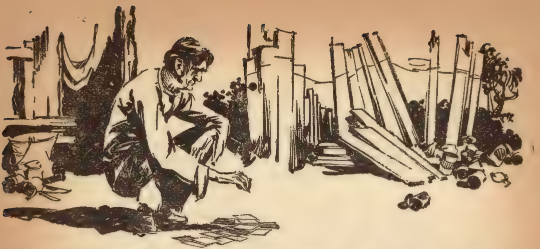
I SEEM to see the old saloon;
The sawdust on the floor,
To hear the twanging fiddle's tune,
And there's a cold and yellow moon a' shining on the door.

I hear old voices of the dead
Who gather at the bar;
The tones of those who perished
Upon the seas afar—
It is the hand of such a one that holds the door ajar.

He says, "I'm signing on once more
To take a trip to sea;
I'm tired of the sights ashore,
As tired as can be.
I'll take a parting drink with you, and you take one with me."

And everybody turns around,
And every eye is bright;
They are the ghosts of many drowned
Who gather here at night
To bide about the dock a while and go before the light.

I loved the old dockside saloon
With sawdust on the floor,
Where often in the fiddle's tune
A hand would push the door;
While some old shipmate that I knew
Would smile and beckon me—
"A hooker's signing on her crew—let's take a trip to sea!"



The Killer, The King and The Wise Man

by Nevil Henshaw

Author of "Peasant Wit," "Come Home to Roost," etc.

IT WAS all old Marcel Perrot's fault, anyway. He had no business to pry into the future. The church forbids it. Common sense itself demanded that such things be let alone. But then old Marcel was not like the other Cajuns of that part of Louisiana. He had ideas of his own.

To begin with, he did not rush into marriage in his teens. True, he finally chose a young wife, but this was not until he had reached middle age. And then, when the wife died at the birth of his son, he refused to marry again.

Such things were not done on the prairie. Wives were like horses. One could not get on without them.

As a matter of fact, old Marcel was too shocked to think of risking a second bride. He had planned carefully, building his life upon the solid foundation of experience. His wife had been young and strong. Yet for all this, in less than a year, he was alone again. It was something to think about. Sorely perplexed, old Marcel bent his efforts to the successful raising of his son. Even then all might have been well but for the intervention of Pere Carbon.

Pere Carbon was a fisherman who peddled his wares between the edge of the sea marsh and the town of St. Pierre. Gnarled, weather-beaten, receiving tales but never bearing them, he had become the confidant of those who dwelt upon the prairie.

Thus, when next old Marcel encountered the rickety, dripping fish wagon, he unburdoned himself of his fears. He was a careful man, as Pere Carbon knew. His wife had been young—almost a child. Yet she had gone in a day. And now what about his son, Vic? Of course he was doing what he could. But who knew? For all his care the little one might snap out like a match in the wind.

Pere Carbon considered the matter, twisting a strand of wet moss that he had drawn through the slats of his wagon. Knowing his petitioner, he did not suggest a second wife. Indeed, it was through just such delicate distinctions that folk had come to confide in him.

It was life, he observed finally. One must expect such things. It was best to leave them to *le bon Dieu*. Why worry about them?

However, it was possible to set one's mind at rest by consulting a wise man. There was, for example, the one on Pecan Island. Perhaps old Marcel had heard of him? He it was who threw the card. To him such problems were a trifle. And, better still, his prophecies were absolutely to be relied on.

The mischief was done. Old Marcel's imagination was fired. At once he made his arrangements. Next morning he climbed aboard the returning fish wagon and set out for the marsh and Pecan Island.

As they went along Pere Carbon gave certain instructions. This one who threw the card was queer, he said. Perhaps it was his great age, his wisdom. At all events he was not given to unnecessary speech. Sometimes he would say nothing at all. At best he would mutter but a word or so. Let old Marcel think carefully of his question. He might depend utterly upon any forthcoming answer.

They found the wise man before the door of his hut, a fantastic arrangement of driftwood and marsh grass that resembled the nest of some mammoth muskrat. A strange creature, this sage, incredibly old and thin, with eyes that seemed to have withdrawn into the uttermost depths of the red-rimmed holes of his head. Squatting motionless in the full glare of the sun, he faced his visitors with no faintest sign of recognition.

At a word from Pere Carbon old Marcel squatted also. Next, producing three silver dollars, he laid them silently before him. Still the seer remained motionless. True, his eyes performed a strange contortion. It was as if they slipped furtively out to the mouths of their burrows and darted back again. But that was all.

Observing this, old Marcel added a fourth dollar to the ones before him. For all the effect they produced they might have been so much lead.

A fifth dollar proved more potent. At sight of it the wise man became instantly and weirdly alive. With one skinny arm he reached out for the money. With the other he fumbled about at the door of his hut until he had unearthed a handful of filthy cards. These he nursed into a pack; afterward spreading them, backs up, in a single sweep before him.

For three long minutes he eyed the cards, brooding motionless. Then, all at once, his hand went out to hover above them. There was no twist, no jerk, no downward thrust so far as the watchers could see. Yet, for all that, a card jumped suddenly out from the rest to fall back face upward. Through its heavy coating of grease and smoke it proclaimed itself the Jack of Spades.

"Now," murmured Pere Carbon, who squatted just beyond the patron's shoulder.

The moment had come. Nor was old Marcel unprepared for it. Thanks to Pere Carbon's coaching he had his question ready. So carefully had he thought of it that, when he spoke, it was as if he emptied his mind entirely.

"My son, Vic?" he demanded. "What will be his fate?"

There was a space of silence. For a time it seemed that old Marcel would have only his trouble for his pains. But at last the wise man spoke, slowly, wheezingly, his words fluttering out as though born of some intolerable labor.

"He will die in a chair," said he.

That was all. Though old Marcel waited patiently, the wise man did not speak again. Rather he froze into a still more rigid pose, while his eyes slid back into the lairs appointed for them.

"So," muttered Pere Carbon. "We will go now."

And the visitors withdrew, leaving the sage to the solitude of his island.

SOME men might have been dissatisfied. Six words for five dollars? There was expense for you. Old Marcel, however, was content. He had learned what he wanted to know. It would have been cheap at ten times the sum.

His son would die in a chair. There it was—the whole future in those scant six words. For the rest, the danger might well be avoided. What if the wise man had said "In a house," "On a horse?" Here would have been a problem.

Thus old Marcel returned hopefully to the raising of his Vic. Such chairs as he owned he discarded, replacing them with stools and boxes. The thing was quite plain. It had been planned that, during his early years, the little one would climb on to a chair and, falling from it, destroy himself. With no chairs there could be no destruction. It was easily arranged.

Later, when Vic was running wild about the prairie, old Marcel again took counsel with himself. The danger of an infantile fall was now definitely over. New methods were called for.

Should he tell the boy and divide his responsibility? But no. Such things were not for the young. At the proper time he would inform him. In the meanwhile he would discover and thwart any further menace that fate held in store for his offspring.

Old Marcel meant well. It was only that

he placed his faith in good intentions. Some few days later he was tossed from the saddle, and went the swift way of a broken neck.

II

BEREFT of both father and prophecy, Vic Perrot was bereft of all else. Death brings adjustment of debts, and old Marcel owed more than his share of them. Once these were settled, nothing remained.

Somehow Vic scrambled through boyhood. In his teens he left the prairie for town. His late twenties found him at one of St. Pierre's cypress mills. Here he looked after the placing and disposal of the various lumber piles.

At this time, as later, he appeared the least formidable of men. He was tall, he was lank, and the mildness of his brown, hatchet face seemed mirrored in his milk-blue eyes. Save for the struggle of life his days had been wholly uneventful. Then things happened all at once.

They began one day at noon when, after the blowing of the whistle, Vic's boss called a last order to a dinner-bound hand. The hand, a black, gorilla-like creature, replied with an oath and kept on.

The result, at that time and place, was inevitable. Having floored the hand with a new cypress plank, the boss dropped the matter from his mind. It appeared merely one of countless similar incidents that had gone before.

But this time the noon hour and a grog shop intervened. Returning full of mean liquor, the hand sought out the boss. Without a word and at point blank range he shot him dead.

The affair was unfortunately timed. Thanks to the recent activities of St. Pierre's regulators, certain of the blacks were on edge. Escaping from the cypress mill, the murderer sought refuge with his kind. Nor did he seek in vain. Posses, crossing the bayou to the colored settlement of Freetown, were warned not to approach beyond a given point. Freetown itself bristled suddenly with arms. A miniature race war was on.

It was at this point that Vic Perrot became involved. The murder had left him stunned. He was still stunned when the mill whistle sounded its call to arms. Accepting the weapon that was thrust upon him, Vic joined the crowd that streamed toward Freetown.

As he hurried along he wondered just what he would do. He was well armed with a new Colt of large caliber. Yet, for all this, he doubted his ability to accomplish anything. Up to then his acquaintance with firearms had been discouragingly casual.

Arriving at Freetown, Vic found it deserted. During the wait for reinforcements its defenders had withdrawn. Word came that they had barricaded themselves in a dance hall a half mile from town. A hardy band, equipped with rifles, at once pushed forward. The more timorous and lesser armed decided to remain behind.

Not so Vic Perrot. Clutching his Colt, he trailed along. He was not brave. He was not even curious. It was purely mechanical. He was still in a daze.

Arrived near the dance hall, the besiegers halted. Those in command considered the situation. The building was old. Its half-rotted walls offered the resistance of so much pasteboard. Furthermore it stood in an open space surrounded by brush and trees.

The plan of attack was as plain as it was simple. Five minutes later a ring had been formed under cover, and the firing began at long range.

From a place in the rear Vic followed these operations. As yet his revolver was useless. The affair lacked the thrill that one would have expected from it. Here was a crowd of men shooting into the blank and decrepit walls of a building. They might as well have been firing at a target. Vic looked on dully. In a vague way he had hoped for some fun.

Then, at a shouted command, the ring closed in, and the fun began. Now a brisk fire rattled back from the dance hall. Dark forms slipped suddenly from its doors and windows to a last, futile dash at escape.

The effect on Vic was instantaneous. In a flash his daze gave way to a species of madness. At once he rushed forward, making straight for the dance hall. And as he went he screamed shrilly, waving his Colt like some ridiculous flag.

Bullets whined past Vic from front and rear. Voices called to him, cursing him for a fool. But he still kept on. There was only one thought in his mind now. He must get himself one of those maddened fugitives. It was what he was there for. Why wait till the rifles had finished them all?

A black figure appeared swinging off to the left. Swinging also, Vic snapped up his Colt. He did not seem to aim. He was scarcely conscious of firing. Yet, instantly and amazingly, the figure pitched flat to the ground.

"One," thought Vic, and swung on a second figure.

The result was the same.

After this the daze came back even worse than before. It was like the time when Vic leaped from the bayou bank to a head-on collision with a sunken log. Only when he bumped into it did he recognize the wall of the dance hall. Bullets bit viciously into its shattered boards. Yet Vic paid no heed.

Still mad with the lust of slaughter, he made for the nearest opening. One glance was enough. At sight of the shambles inside he faced about shouting.

"Hola!" he cried. "It is over. Stop shooting and come."

III

BACK in town again, Vic found himself famous. Despite his evident foolhardiness he was acclaimed the hero of the fight. And a great fight it was for St. Pierre. They even spoke of it as the Battle of Freetown.

As for Vic's deeds, they increased with each hour. By dark they had reached the rank growth which comes, inevitably, through repetition.

He was something, this Perrot. He had captured the dance hall single-handed. And he had not missed a shot. He had bagged six, eight—an even dozen. In short he was a killer. That said it in a word.

Vic himself was far from sure of this. Once his madness had passed he realized that he had merely played the fool. He shrank now from the thought of those myriad whining bullets. Through what miracle had he escaped them? Here was something impossible to understand.

Yet he had the wit to realize his opportunity. At least he had been lucky. Perhaps he would be lucky again. Here was the promise of something better than the cypress mill. Very well, he would see. That night he made a triumphant round of the coffee houses. The affair ended as it had begun—in a daze.

In the week that followed Vic was occupied with the aftermath of the fight. Though peace was restored, he found that there were many loose ends to tie up. Certain black men were questioned. A few were locked up. There was even a shooting or so.

Vic played his part in these various proceedings as one who had earned the right. Each day he advanced the subjection of Freetown. Afterward he repaired to the Gold Lion.

As a coffee house the Gold Lion was supreme. It purveyed all the comforts of man. Its bar of fine wood all but covered one generous reach of wall space. Along the other was ranked a company of small tables for coffee and cards. A restaurant brought up the rear, and above was a floor of bedrooms.

There was even a barber shop, reached by a small swinging door at the head of the bar. True, this last was not of the Gold Lion proper, but there it was. One could push through the swing door from inner to outer refreshment.

Going out from the other side one entered an alley, floored with planks, and closed in by the high brick walls of buildings. Here was a spot superbly adapted to the settling of personal difficulties. It added a final touch to an otherwise perfect establishment.

A great place—the Gold Lion. Through its doors passed all those who made fervid the life of St. Pierre. Vic could not well avoid passing also. It was the world to which he aspired.

At first he found it a kindly world. He was Perrot, the killer. His deeds were fresh in all minds. Food, drinks, coffee—these were fairly thrust upon him. At the card tables it was the same. If lucky he pocketed his winnings. Should he lose, the debt was quite good for some other time.

Better still was the attitude of his fellow killers. Miguez, the chief of them, seemed wholly complaisant. A small, dark man of Spanish blood, he accepted Vic as a brother. Those of less standing followed his example. Miguez was a cat with long claws. It was enough that he approved.

Thus Vic came into his own, and for a time he drifted pleasantly. Then, gradually, there came a change. The Battle of Freetown passed into history. Fresh interests arose. From being possible, it became imperative for Vic to pay as he went.

This was only as it should be. Versed

now in the ways of his world, Vic found means to get along. But soon he was faced with a graver problem. The hour for fresh effort arrived.

This also was as it should be. A killer is no better than his kill. Sooner or later his brilliance will fade. Then he becomes the prey of his kind. To survive he must fill in a new background of red.

As was proper, Miguez began it. Indifference changed to coldness. Next came hostility, thinly veiled. There were sneers, half-caught as Vic passed along.

"So," murmured Miguez. "A few blackbirds, eh? And on the wing? One must do more for a reputation."

Vic knew the signs. An insult was near now—swift, venomous insult, like the stroke of a snake. When it came he must ask Miguez out into the alley. And then——

It was the "then" that bothered Vic. After all what were a few blackbirds? What, in fact, was his exploit save a matter of luck? Luck would not do for Miguez. One could scarce count on it a second time.

Of course he could shoot. It was a natural gift as he had proved through repeated practise with his Colt. But a target was no more a man than Miguez was an ordinary individual. Could he shoot with Miguez? That was the question.

There remained the cypress mill. But that would be the end of his career. Yet a duel might mean the end of life itself. An end—there seemed nothing else in view. And he could not even decide on a beginning.

Fearful, tormented, Vic played for time. He moved warily at the Gold Lion, choosing those hours when Miguez was absent. Drawn to it by some strange fascination, he walked each day through the alley, like a general considering a battlefield.

In this way he ran across Pere Carbon.

PERE CARBON knew all about Vic. Did he not bring fish each week to the kitchen of the Gold Lion? And was not the kitchen a clearing house for the doings in front?

Trust Pere Carbon to know. Nor had the years dimmed his usefulness. Perhaps he was a trifle more gnarled and sunbrowned. That was all.

Thus, when Vic entered the alley, he called to him, twisting a strand of wet moss from his wagon as was his habit in beginning a conversation. He spoke with the bluntness of one long wearied by a race of verbal fencers.

"See, Vic?" he demanded. "Why do you not kill this Miguez?"

Vic shrank as from an indecency. His problem stalked naked before him.

"You old fool—" he began angrily.

Pere Carbon raised a hand that was like the knot of a tree.

"Pardon," said he. "It is you who are the fool. Already folk are laughing at you. And you, with your luck, let them do so."

Vic stared. He knew of Pere Carbon. But this—could the old man read one's mind?

"Luck?" he echoed.

"As you know," went on Pere Carbon. "That other business, all those bullets. They did not touch you, eh? And why?"

Vic nodded.

"Yes," said he. "That is it. Why?"

There was a pause while Pere Carbon stared in turn, his wrinkles all twisted in a network of surprise.

"*Cher bon Dieu,*" he swore finally. "And your old father did not tell you? But I was there myself, Vic. It was this way——"

Pere Carbon made a good job of it. It was all quite fresh in his mind. Through the magic of his telling the prophecy became a thing alive. Vic could see the seer of Pecan Island—the very card as it leaped from the sand.

And Vic was impressed. He was half convinced. All those bullets? How else could the miracle of the dance hall be explained?

What if the wise man had spoken truly? It would change the whole face of his problem. He would die in a chair, eh? That meant that, in the alley, he would be safe from Miguez. In fact, so long as he avoided chairs, he would be safe from any man.

Dropping his moss, Pere Carbon waited. Vic wavered toward decision. He was thinking of the future now. Broad vistas were opening out before him. Of course there were certain conditions. He turned to Pere Carbon.

"You have spoken of this business?"

"Not before today."

"And you can keep it to yourself?"

"I have done so all these years."

It was the hour when Miguez frequented the coffee house. At the thought Vic made up his mind.

"*Bien,*" said he. "I will rely on you,

friend Carbon. Drive out now from this alley. I have business to do."

One minute later Vic pushed into the Golden Lion. As he entered he met Monsieur Bassin, the proprietor, in the doorway. A Frenchman from France, Monsieur Bassin's courtesy had been like some fine garment from the other side. Now he spoke with the tatters of this former politeness.

"So, Perrot," said he familiarly. "You owe me twelve dollars. Is it that you are here to pay?"

A snigger sounded from a table near at hand. Vic swung on it very much as he had swung on his victims of the dance hall. Miguez came to his feet in a flash, his grin half changed to a snarl. Then Vic spoke, quietly yet precisely, that all might hear.

"Miguez," said he, "I am told that you question my reputation. Let us see now if you will question it again—outside."

Four glass-paned doors gave into the alley. Going over to the first of them, Vic drew his Colt and waited. A moment later Miguez was at the farthest door, weapon in hand. There were no seconds, no signals. The two started shooting as soon as they stepped outside.

Vic remembered little of what occurred. It was over too quickly for detail. He could have sworn that he fired no more than twice. Yet, when they picked Miguez up, three bullets were in his body.

Upon Vic's next visit to the Gold Lion, Monsieur Bassin all but raced forward to greet him. Again the proprietor's voice was a benediction. It enveloped Vic as with rich, clinging folds.

"Monsieur Perrot!" it said. "And what is your order? My poor place is at your command."

Vic was established. What before had been a reputation was now the reputation of St. Pierre. The law made no trouble. It had been a personal affair. The few rules governing such encounters had been fully complied with.

Again Vic reaped the rewards of his prowess. But with a difference. His days of drifting were over. He strode now surefooted along the path of his endeavor.

And all through the prophecy. Its stark warning became a gracious deliverance. Vic cherished it as one cherishes a priceless gift. His faith in it held no faintest shadow of doubt or question. What the dance hall promised Miguez had assured. It was more than enough. Vic made the prophecy his religion. Thence onward it ordered the course of his life.

The situation was not without its disadvantages. Before Vic had looked on chairs as contrivances for his comfort and ease. Now, all at once, they became his chief menace. And this to one whose fortunes moved largely with the run of the cards.

Vic did not hesitate. He affected a boredom toward stud and euchre. He turned to roulette, vingt-et-un and klondike. These he played briefly, standing up to his bets at the tables. His drinks he took at the bar. Only his meals found him seated. And through it all he moved with a shrewdness, a carefulness that gave no suggestion of change.

For here was a second menace. Once guessed, the prophecy would destroy him. As it had raised him up, so would it dash him down again. Caught off his feet, all his skill would not save him.

This was Vic's creed, born of his superstition. Out of a chair he knew himself invincible. In one he was equally assured of vulnerability.

So he went on, extending his activities. Now he was out with the Regulators. Again he changed the destinies of some political party. Feuds claimed him, both public and private. As a deputy he was unexcelled.

Often he shot through necessity. Sometimes through pride or sheer wantonness. But always he shot on his feet. And always he came through scatheless.

He became a marvel of killers. He promised always to endure. It seemed that nothing could stop him.

Then Fate, the ironical, sent Poufette Labau to the Gold Lion.

IV

POUFETTE bore scant resemblance to an avenging angel. As a mere mortal he was rather absurd. He was a short, fat man, very puffy and red, with a face like that of a pig.

In disposition he was piggish also. Where others soared toward their ambitions, Poufette rooted. It was his way.

Like Vic, Poufette came from the prairie. He was of Crabtown, a small settlement so known through its proximity to the sea marsh. Also, like Vic, Poufette sought the dominance of his fellow men. But in a more limited sphere.

Poufette was King of Crabtown. That is to say that, on Saturday nights, when the folk ride in, he made a mild nuisance of himself. Then he emerged upon the parish road with a rusty bull-dog revolver. As he approached the horse rack before the coffee house, he blazed skyward with his clumsy weapon.

There would come a snorting, a snapping of bridles, the mad whir and scatter that accompanies the flushing of a huddle of Cajun ponies. Amid this confusion Poufette would swagger inside to become his own herald.

"I am Poufette!" he would shout. "Me—I am King of Crabtown!"

None gainsaid him, chiefly through inertia. Some one must rule at Crabtown. Why not Poufette? In a way it was amusing. And the ponies could always be rounded up again.

The effect of this was unfortunate. Offensive always, Poufette bade fair to become unendurable. His pose was that of a conqueror. In reality he was the cheapest of cowards.

As such he had avoided the Gold Lion upon his rare visits to St. Pierre. Here deeds were sometimes required as well as words. Poufette preferred the humbler places back of town. They allowed him to brag to his heart's content, so long as his cash remained.

Thus Poufette had some excuse for his indiscretion. He would never have gone to the Gold Lion but for the *pousse-cafés*.

Poufette heard of them at the time when he was surfeited with more ordinary liquors. They were marvelous, so said his tempter—tiny jewels of drinks that were striped like a barber's pole. True, they cost money. But what would one have with a rainbow?

This last added to Poufette's undoing. Niggardly always, he presently set forth alone. Let his friends wait until he returned. His should be the sole glory of this jewel of drinks. Cheap whiskey had made a storm in his brain. He would end it with the bright rainbow of a *pousse-café*.

Entering the Gold Lion, Poufette made straight for the bar. He ordered grandly if a trifle thickly. Afterward he concentrated as best he could upon the making of the drink. But here he gained only an impression of confusion. It was as if Monsieur Bassin crowded the entire contents of his shelves into the minute barrel of the liqueur glass.

Poufette watched fascinated. All that effort for one drink? No wonder it cost money. Yet, when the *pousse-café* was a thing accomplished, he tossed it off with scarce a glance, as became the King of Crabtown.

Poufette experienced a feeling of defeat. For all the wonder of the concoction, its full savor had somehow eluded him. He had not managed to get his teeth into it. Perhaps another——

The second *pousse-café* lingered more pleasantly upon Poufette's palate. It seemed to join with the first one, producing a warm, rich feeling both above and below. This was better. A third one now——

With the third *pousse-café* Poufette forgot the Gold Lion. He forgot even its suave and majestic proprietor. The tiny drinks began to assert themselves. They were as final straws upon the burden of the day's libations. Poufette became filled with a vast importance. As was his custom, he hastened to express it.

"I am Poufette!" he bellowed unsteadily. "Me—I am King of Crabtown!"

Monsieur Bassin smote upon his bar. He was like a scandalized bishop.

"Come!" he ordered. "We will have none of that here. Were you Vic Perrot himself I would not allow it."

The name alone pierced the fogs of Poufette's brain. He recalled Vic Perrot as a long-legged youth who had sometimes ridden through Crabtown. Since then he had heard of him—just what, he could not now remember. But no difference. It was enough that he was from the prairie. Lurching about, Poufette addressed the bar at large.

"Eh you, Vic Perrot!" he called boisterously. "Come and drink with the King. It will be something for you to talk about."

His words brought a roar of derisive laughter. Even Monsieur Bassin smiled. But only for a monmet. After all, this farce held the elements of tragedy. Leaning forward he spoke sharply to Poufette.

"My friend," said he, "you are indiscreet. Monsieur Perrot has a very quick way with him. Fortunately he has gone out of town.

If you are wise, you will make haste to follow his example."

Poufette did not understand. The laughter had completed his demoralization. He only knew that he had been insulted. And all through this cursed Vic Perrot.

Again he faced round on the room. For the moment his brain was on fire. Its heat seemed to shrivel his tongue. It clutched at his throat, half choking him.

Thus he spoke slowly and carefully. His voice lost its bullying tone. Now his words seemed of deadly intent. It was the final misfortune.

"So," said he. "Vic Perrot, eh? Tell him that, when I see him, I will attend to him. Tell him——"

Poufette got no further. As if tired of their sport, the *pousse-cafés* suddenly triumphed. There came a blackness, thick and whirling. Staggering forward, Poufette collapsed upon the nearest chair.

Yet, for once he had produced a genuine sensation. It persisted while his friends were sent for. It followed him in his long, insensible journey across the prairie. It endured through the night, causing certain awe-struck citizens of Crabtown to awake their King in the dawn of the following morning.

They were thorough, these citizens. Thanks to their visit to the Gold Lion, they were now fully aware of Vic's prowess. They left nothing unexplained. Five minutes after their departure Poufette was in the saddle. Though no horseman, he established a record that morning between Crabtown and St. Pierre.

Returning at nightfall, Vic heard of his rival. Monsieur Bassin informed him with a wealth of small detail, as was his way. But Vic shrugged the matter aside. He was tired from the day's exertions. In addition he had heard of Poufette. Why trouble about a drunken braggart? He had earned the right to ignore them.

Next morning Vic was less confident. Refreshed now, his natural caution reasserted itself. As he put on his clothes he recalled Monsieur Bassin's graphic description. Though drunk, Poufette had finally ceased his bluster. He had ended on a note of grim determination.

It appeared now that the man meant business. Also an envious coward could become the most dangerous of creatures. Vic decided that he would shoot on sight. Should Poufette return, a new king would be needed at Crabtown.

Passing out to the street, Vic made for the Gold Lion. Once inside, he pushed through the swing door into the barber shop. It was his custom to shave before breakfast. His position demanded such niceties.

Levec, the head barber, called a good morning. Vic replied, slipping out of his coat. Having mounted the chair, he threw loose his suspenders. Like one performing a rite, Levec adjusted a hair cloth.

Under cover of the hair cloth Vic reached up to the holster beneath his left arm. When, an instant later, Levec tilted him back, his Colt lay ready at his waist line. It was only his usual procedure. A killer's life is made up of such trifling precautions.

Secure and at ease, Vic abandoned himself to the luxury of the moment. The hot towels were of just the right temperature. The lather spread smoothly fragrant. Levec, brush in hand, murmured discreetly. Vic closed his eyes. His thoughts drifted off upon the flood of small talk.

All at once he came back with a start. Had some one called his name from inside the bar? Now the voice went on, hoarsely earnest. "In the barber shop? Yes, I am Poufette Labau."

Vic brought his head up sharply. As he did so Levec reached down for a last touch of lather. Face and brush met in soft, smearing impact. Caught fairly across the eyes, Vic dropped back again.

But only for an instant. His position was now acute. He must get on his feet. He must free his eyes of the biting smother that blinded them.

Grasping the chair with his free left hand, Vic heaved forward. He came only a little way before something checked him. Puzzled, alarmed, he exerted his strength. And again the mysterious tether snared him. At this moment the swinging door creaked. Poufette was entering the barber shop.

A whirl of thoughts swept through Vic's tortured mind. He was trapped. He was blinded. He was in a chair. The prophecy had him. Let it come then. He was ready. As well now as later.

But to be killed by Poufette? To become the victim of the King of Crabtown? It was too much. Death came to every man. Disgrace was different.

At least he would cheat Poufette, he would preserve his reputation. His friends must not laugh at his memory. It must be said of him that he finished gamely.

As swift as the thought, Vic shifted his Colt. He knew the right spot upon the left hand side. He fairly clutched at the trigger. The rest was a roar of sound.

With the shot Poufette entered the barber shop. He had meant to advance in an attitude of surrender. But the crash of the Colt was too much for him. Dropping his hands, he used them to cover his face.

"Mercy," he babbled. "It is a mistake, M'sieu Perrot. I am here to apologize. I was drunk. I was mad. I——"

Levec, the head barber, called to him roughly from above the huddled figure in the chair.

"Come you, get out," he commanded. "M'sieu Perrot is dead." And to those who crowded in a moment later he explained the stained hair cloth clutched in one trembling hand.

"You see," said he. "It was an accident. Always had I warned him against that drawn pistol. It came when he struggled to free himself. Observe now how his suspenders are twisted about the arms of the chair."

BASEBALL IS 'ELL

by Hubert Kelley

THESE yowlin' Yanks 'ave got a game they call
Baseball! They sees 'ow many they can kill
With 'ard oak bats, a little 'orse-'ide ball
And bristlin' spiky shoes. Gawd, wot a thrill!
It's like a Spanish bullfight or a war;
It's murderous but thrill'n all the same.
You buy the beer— You want to 'ear some more?
It's base—that's where it gets its bloomin' name.

If this aren't truth, then may I scorch below,
But once we 'ad a bloomin' Yank with us
Up Bapaume way. Gawd, 'ow 'e could throw
A blinkin' 'and grenade. 'E made more fuss
In Jerry's line than all the boundin' guns.
Four 'undred feet and—*bang!* 'E made 'em 'iss!
"Wow!" 'e would say. "Fritz made no bloomin' runs
Today." Pop 'em atween the eyes. And miss?
'E never did. Sometimes 'e threw at one
And, when 'e ducked, it popped 'is mate.
Killed 'im afore it bust. "Oh, Gawd, wot fun!"
Cries Yank. "That was an outshoot then—not fate."

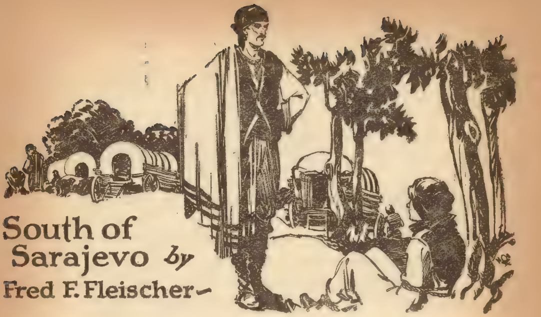
Then, one bright day, the bombs start flyin' back,
And Yank goes wild. "That's Weber in the box,"
Says 'e. " 'E's got a wicked arm. Can crack

It like a blacksnake whip. Gosh, 'ow 'e socks
That pill across the plate! No pitcher in the world
But 'im and me can throw like that. 'E beaned
Me once in Frisco—sent a ball that curled
Around my dome and knocked me cold. I'd cleaned
'Im then, but 'e was gone when I come to.
Then 'e joined Fritz and I—I joined with George,
And if that's Weber shootin' us a few,
I'll poke an iron baseball down 'is gorge."

We laughed and pulled 'is leg, but 'e just spat
And walked away. But pretty soon 'e's back,
Swingin' a little spade. "This is a baseball bat,"
Says 'e, climbin' the parapet. "I'll crack
The first 'ot pill that comes across, or Death
Can call me out!" 'E stood up straight and peered,
There in full view of Fritz. We 'eld our breath.
"It's Weber, lads," says 'e. "I ain't afeard."

Then—*whizz!* We 'eard that damned grenade
Splittin' the air from Jerry's parapet.
"Strike one!" yells Death, as Yank swings down 'is spade.
"Over the plate!" 'e cries. "I'll bag it yet."
The egg explodes and lays three laddies low.
Then—*zing!* Another comes, and Yank swings 'ard.
"Strike two!" yells Death. "I'll soak 'er this time, bo,"
The Yank shouts back. Then—zip! 'E's on 'is guard!
Wham!—goes the spade. "A 'omer!" yells the Yank.
Up soars the egg and off 'e tears alone
To Jerry's line, as fearless as a tank.
The tattoo of machine guns rattles up.
We watch 'im run. We see 'im jump the wire.
The 'eavies goes in action. *Sq-q-q-queal and k-r-r-upp!*
The Yanks gets small and smaller in the fire——

'E's gone!
"'E was a good one—Yank," we said,
All sad-like, sittin' on the step. "'E's fell."
A 'ome-run 'it, 'e called it. Strike me dead!
It aren't no bloomin' game. Baseball is 'ell.



South of Sarajevo

by

Fred F. Fleischer

Author of "The Bandit of Banyaluka"

IT IS an old saying, effendi: "When the Gipsy comes to the village, guard thy horses and thy women." This is not written in the Koran, but is a saying of the people of Bosnia and there is much truth in these words, as I shall tell thee.

I would rather smoke one of thy cigarets, effendi, one of those thou hast brought from Istamboul. There is good tobacco, Anatolian tobacco, in them and the smoke is blue. Those which I must buy from Stefanopoulos, the Greek, are bad. Since the war began, he has mixed tea and laurel leaves with cheap Drama tobacco. His cigarets are poor and so am I. But he is rich.

Ayee, effendi, give me one of thy cigarets and listen to this tale:

My father's *han* stood on the plateau of the Konir Mountains, not far from the city of Banyaluka. He was a well-to-do man, and the plum crops which he sold to the traders of Slavonia brought him many Austrian eagles. Yes, effendi, it is true that I am a poor man, for I was a second son, and in those days, as it is now, the oldest son inherited the estate.

But in the time of which I speak I was contented to look after my father's horses, for there were many, and to look forward to the day when my brothers and I would drive many wagon-loads of plums across the Save River to Hungarian Brod where the traders would buy them and make a handsome profit by reselling them to the distillers who made a brandy from the juice, called *slivovic*. It is a drink of *sheitan's* make, and the faithful do not touch it. It was upon one of our visits to Slavonia that my older brother bought a horse from a trader.

I can not tell thee, effendi, how an Arabian stallion had found its way into the hands of an Hungarian infidel, but it was there and for sale, and Murzuk bought the horse. It was named El Ghaleb, which in thy language means the Conqueror, for few men if any had ever ridden the brute, and this was the reason why it was for sale.

My father was pleased, not only because the price was low, but also because he knew that the Pasha of Mostar was willing to pay a goodly sum for an Arabian stallion and that every horse trader in Bosnia and in the Hercegovina was on the lookout for such a horse and many high bids had been made.

I, as I have told thee, effendi, was taking care of my father's horses, and it fell to my lot to train the animal so that the Pasha could ride him. A spirited horse, which would have thrown Abu Sharval. Nay, effendi, such was not his name, but Ahmet Agha. He was called Abu Sharval by the people who always bestow a nickname upon those whom they do not care to call by their proper names. Abu Sharval, effendi, means Father of Wide Trousers, and the pasha was a Turk from Istamboul, who ruled the sandchak of Hercegovina for the Sultan ul Islam a long time before the Austrians came to Bosnia.

Do ask thy questions when I have finished this tale, effendi, and leave thy cigarets on this tambouret so I will not have to ask thee for another one.

My days were spent in training El Ghaleb. There were times when I was willing to give up in despair, for he would not permit me to mount him. But I knew my father had given me this task and I had to finish it, for my father was a stern man and his punishments were frequent and quick.

One day I had led El Ghaleb into the road which follows the Verbas River and leads from Bosna Seray into Banyaluka. There was little travel in these days, and if the horse would run away, it could be in two directions only, for on one side there were the mountains and the river was on the other.

As I reached the road, from the path which led down from my father's *han*, the cavalcade of the Turkish governor from Bosna Seray passed me, and as was the custom in these days, I salaamed and shouted the greeting—

"*Tchok Yasha Padishahim.*"

With this shout, a change came over the horse. The brute had been restless and dancing, and now he had become docile. I had heard it said that the Arabs talk to their horses and that they had certain phrases with which to pacify them, but I had never seen it done nor had I believed it. This came into my mind, and I quickly took the opportunity to mount the horse. I had to ride him bareback and I did ride him back to the *han* on the plateau of the Konir Mountains.

Have patience, effendi, I know I spoke of Gipsies. I shall come to this presently. *Inshallah*, but these cigarets are good.

From then on, ere I would mount El Ghaleb, I would whisper the greeting into his ear and he would become as docile as the lambs on the plains of Dolna Douzla.

Seeing that the period of training for the horse had passed and that the pasha would be able to ride him, my father bid me to take the horse to Mostar and to sell it to the pasha.

Quickly I was on my way. On the second day I reached Bosna Seray and spent the night with my uncle Husref Beg, and in the morning I was on my way to Mostar, which is South of Sarajevo.

AUSTRIA
HUNGARY
VENICE
BOSNIA
SARAJEVO
ADRIATIC SEA
ITALY

It was on the evening of the third day when I came upon a camp of Gipsies, and as I was tired and needed food, I decided to stop with them. I was young then, effendi, and the Gipsies are musicians and dancers and their women are comely.

Just ahead of us was the town of Konitza on the Narenta River on the border line between Bosnia and Hercegovina which countries were separate *sandchaks* in these days. I did not care to go to Konitza for I knew no one in the town, and the people there were not friendly inclined to strangers. So I stayed with the Gipsies.

Their king was Zulfikar, and he was a strong man. Well should I know later on. The women were cooking *pillaw* in iron kettles and the men were sitting around the fires making music. Some were playing the *tamboora*, which is a guitar played with a quill and others used the *gûsla*, which is a one-stringed fiddle, played with a bow.

They played well and I liked the music. Zulfikar accepted the ten *piastres* which I offered to pay for food and my share of a tent, and his eyes, while he talked to me, strayed often to El Ghaleb. I knew the love a Gipsy bears for a good horse and I understood. But I decided to be watchful, for most Gipsies are horse-thieves, and the Turks were quick in their justice only when no gold tickled the palms of their hands.

No Kadi would hang a Gipsy for stealing a horse if the Gipsy had a price to pay for his life. And not only were the Gipsies quick with gold to free one of their tribe, but also with their daggers, and every Turkish Kadi knew it.

THE night was cool, and after I had eaten my fill of *pillaw* I decided to retire. I rolled myself into the covers which Zulfikar had provided for me, and lay down near the entrance of the tent so that I could see El Ghaleb where I had tied him to an olive tree.

Even before I had dozed off, two Gipsies had entered and lain down to sleep in the tent. As I had ridden hard all day, I was tired, and I believe I had fallen asleep. The next thing I knew, I was laying on my back and one of my tent-mates was kneeling on my chest, while the other tied my hands to my sides and then proceeded to strap my ankles together with his belt.

When they had finished—I was too dazed to make much of a resistance—they called for Zulfikar. But he did not enter the tent. He ordered the men to bring me out into the open. They carried me out and placed me against a tree. Then Zulfikar approached me and said—

"Wilt thou sell me thy horse, Moslem?"

Just then my senses returned. I knew that Zulfikar would surely take El Ghaleb and that I would receive just punishment from my father's hands for having lost the horse. I also knew that Zulfikar would not be able to ride the horse and that I could trace him and his tribe until I would find him and bring him to justice. No Kadi would be lenient with him if I used my father's name, and it was a well-known name in these days, effendi. So I merely shook my head and said:

"No, I will not sell thee El Ghaleb, for he is too good a horse to be ridden by a Gipsy; besides the horse is destined for Ahmet Agha, Pasha of Mostar."

As soon as I had said this, I wished I had bitten off my tongue ere I had spoken. For instead of frightening the Gipsy with the pasha's name, I only had increased the Gipsy's desire for the horse. He, too, must have known of the pasha's quest for an Arabian horse and since the pasha's harem was always well filled, due to the efforts of Gipsies, I should have known that Zulfikar and Abu Sharval were not strangers to each other.

In this I was correct, for Zulfikar began to laugh.

"So it is for Abu Sharval, that thou art taking this horse to Mostar. We are also going there, and the Father of Wide Trousers would rather take the horse from the hands of Zulfikar, his friend, than from a Bosnian Moslem whom he likes none too well. I ask thee again, wilt thou sell me the horse, before I am compelled to buy it from thee?"

Well did I know what the Gipsy meant by buying the horse. Quite well did I know this old Gipsy trick, and I shall explain it to thee, effendi, as I continue this tale.

I was helpless, and I cursed myself for a fool for having camped with Zulfikar's tribe. I knew that I could not return to my father's *han* should I lose the horse, and I had no desire to betray my father's trust. So I decided to rely upon my wit and use it in the course of the affair.

They took me into Konitza when the morning came and made straight for the Kadi's house.

The Kadi was an old man, and when the Gipsies brought me before him, still tied, he was already sitting in his chair of justice, fingering his beads and mumbling prayers into his long, white beard. He asked me no questions, but bade Zulfikar to state his case. Thus he did it:

"This man came to our camp last evening and offered to sell me the horse which thou wilt see tied to yon post outside this window, O father of all wise men. I offered him a decent price, but he wished to take advantage of a Gipsy, calling me vile names. I shall pay him a just price and thou wilt enter the purchase contract into the book, for I shall have protection. It shall not be said that I have stolen his horse. Lend me thy ear, O wise one, and take heed, for he is a violent man and harmful. He would have killed me had we not bound him."

It was useless for me to even open my mouth. There were no calls for witnesses, nor the incantation of the Kadi to Allah to send him enlightening so that he might make a just decision. The Kadi's palm was already red with gold, and I knew beforehand what would happen. It did.

The Kadi ordered his scribe to enter the purchase into the book of records, and

Zulfikar laid down ten Austrian gold eagles* upon the desk in front of the Kadi.

"Note thou, wise one, that I shall pay him well and have this sum entered into the book. See thou with thine own eyes that I am going to place these coins into his pocket and give me a paper saying that I have honestly bought the horse."

So saying, Zulfikar picked up the gold again and pretended to place the coins into my pocket. Gipsies are clever with their hands and fingers. Remember, effendi, they are experts in all trades of thievery, and Zulfikar expertly placed the coins back into his own belt from whence they had come.

Why did I not remonstrate? I have told thee, effendi, there were no witnesses and the Kadi was bought. Oh, Turkish justice in Bosnia! It was different when the Austrians came. Then many Gipsies were hanging from the gallows. But then the Austrians also might have bought the horse legally and paid with a price set by a military court. I have seen this done too, but this is another tale.

The Kadi's scribe entered the sale into the book of records and made out a paper for Zulfikar and the Kadi impressed his ring into the sealing wax. Then they turned me loose.

I cried, effendi, when the Gipsies led El Ghaleb away, for I was young then and the fear of my father's punishment was strong in my heart. Zulfikar stopped and saw me crying. This made him laugh and he came over to where I stood.

"Would it not have been better for thee to have sold me thy horse, Moslem?" he asked. "A searching dog will find bones, and I have looked long for a horse which I could take to Ahmet Agha. I shall give thee this cloth to dry thy tears in addition to the eagles in this pocket."

He stuffed a piece of cotton into my pocket and his eyes opened wide:

"Hast thou lost the gold which I have given thee in exchange for thy horse?" he asked in surprize.

These Gipsies are not only musicians and thieves, effendi. They are actors as well.

SO I stood in front of the Kadi's house and looked after the caravan which took my horse away. There came one of the soldiers, who in these days were doing police duty, and asked me if I had money. I told him I had not. He then arrested me on the Kadi's orders for being a vagrant in the town of Konitza, and threw me into jail. This, too, was part of the game, so that I could not follow the Gipsies and see where my father's horse was taken to.

Two days I stayed in the jail of Konitza, and after I was released, I had to spend another day in the willows along the Narenta River, picking the vermin out of my clothes. Thus I had lost three days, and then I decided to go straight to Mostar and make a plea to Abu Sharval himself.

The pasha's palace stood on the hill overlooking the city and many gardens were laid out on the hillside. Through these I had to pass before I would reach the palace, and there I saw several of the pasha's *yanitchari* who were trying to tame a horse.

They were out on the lawn, and while two were holding the horse, another one was using a long whip unsparingly.

There are two things, effendi, which make me mad. Men who beat horses and Greeks who sell bad cigarets. Yes, effendi, I will have one more of these good ones. So I ran across the lawn and, with anger in my heart, began to shout at the soldiers. I did not recognize El Ghaleb at first, for the horse had been badly treated, but I would have acted thus for any other horse, for I love them. When it came to me that my father's horse was thus beaten, I forgot where I was and used my fists on the men. They in turn began to tussle and wrestle with me and the noise rang to heaven.

The man who wielded the whip used it on me as well as on the horse, and my cries brought out the pasha to see what all the tumult was about.

Well was Ahmet Agha named Abu Sharval. He could have carried many of his children in his wide trousers. Ahmet Agha was a fat man and, as he approached us, he seemed to roll over the lawn rather than walk. He was out of breath when he reached us, and I was a sorry sight, for my clothes had been torn and my face was bloody where the rawhide whip had cut the skin.

I tore myself from the grip of the *yanitchari* and salaamed deeply. Then I kissed the hem of his coat and spoke to him in reverent tones. I did not wish to have him speak first, for I knew that his words would have been an order to throw me into the tower of his palace. I had to state my case ere the opportunity was lost forever.

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* 10 guilder pieces.

So I told Abu Sharval how my father had obtained this horse for him from Slavonia and that I had been robbed by the Gipsies while traveling to bring the horse to him. That I had seen the soldiers beat the horse and that I had come to prevent them from doing so.

There I had made another mistake, effendi, for the soldiers were carrying out the pasha's orders and I had no right to interfere. Abu Sharval's brows wrinkled, and he was about to berate me for my daring, but I gave him no time to open his mouth.

"This horse is strong, and a fitting animal to be ridden by the Govenor of Hercegovina, and should not be beaten, for it will lose its beauty," I said to Abu Sharval. "Were it not for this thief, Zulfikar, I would have brought this horse to thee in good shape and ready for the Hadshi procession in which thou wilt ride."

There were numbers of Moslems in Bosnia in these days, effendi, who took the trip to Mekka, and when they returned, they wore the green *tourban* of the Prophet, and were called Hadshi. They assembled for their pilgrimage in the residence towns of the pashas who governed the *sandchaks*, and the pasha would lead the procession. All this is passed now, effendi, and the faithful are few in this land where only the Servians and the Greek get fat.

So Abu Sharval stroked his beard and looked thoughtful. "Tell me," he finally spoke, "how canst thou prove to me that thou hast not sold the horse to Zulfikar and that it is thy father's animal? I have bought this horse from Zulfikar, it is true, but the Gipsy has not told me that he had bought it from thee. It was thy own tale that this sale had taken place at Konitza. Zulfikar has told me that he had bought the horse in Bosna Seray, and that he had ridden it to Mostar."

"Ridden it?" I cried. "O Ahmet Agha, did Zulfikar tell thee that he has ridden this horse? Then I can prove to thee that the Gipsy is a liar and a thief and that I speak the truth. Has the Gipsy left this city?"

"Nay, he is sitting within the palace drinking *moccha* and smoking a *narghileh*," replied the pasha. Then, turning to the soldiers, he ordered, "Omar, Yussuf and thee, Hamid, fetch me Zulfikar, but tell him not of this affair."

THE three *yanitchari* soon returned with the Gipsy and brought him before the pasha. I was standing behind El Ghaleb, stroking his neck, and Zulfikar did not see me. He would not have recognized me at once, for I was disfigured from the cuts on my face.

"Zulfikar," the pasha said, "is this the horse which thou hast bought in Bosna Seray and ridden to Mostar?"

"Ay, O Ahmet Agha, it is the very same animal."

"But this man," the pasha continued, pointing to me, "tells me that it is his horse which thou hast stolen from him at Konitza."

The Gipsy looked at me and recognized me after awhile.

"This man is a liar," said Zulfikar. "Look at him and then consider if a beggar would have enough gold to purchase such a horse of Araby. They do not raise such horses in Bosnia. I have paid one hundred Turkish pounds for this horse, Ahmet Agha, and I made but ten pounds profit, for thou hast only paid me one hundred and ten."

At this I spoke for the first time since the Gipsy had been called:

"Ask thy *yanitchari* to search this thief, Excellency," I said, "and in his pocket they will find the paper the Kadi's scribe at Konitza had made out for ten Austrian gold eagles. And then, O Ahmet Agha, ask this liar to ride El Ghaleb in thy garden. If he has ridden him from Bosna Seray to Mostar, he should be able to do it again, but heed my words, Excellency, he can not sit this horse, for El Ghaleb's back has never been weighed by any other man but thy servant."

Abu Sharval spoke a short command, and ere Zulfikar could gather his wits, two of the soldiers held him while a third one took from his belt the paper I had spoken of. This he handed to the pasha. Abu Sharval took one look and the furrow between his brows deepened.

"Verily, thou art a liar, Zulfikar," he said, "but then a lie is a stock in trade of every Gipsy. I will give thee one more chance. Ride thou this horse, and I will forget for the sake of the Circassian maiden which thou hast brought me this day. Mount this horse, Gipsy, and stay on his back. For if thou art thrown, thou wilt not arise before Yussuf has finished tickling the soles of thy feet with fifty lashes."

At this Zulfikar's face went white. But he was willing to try. He waited until the soldiers had saddled the horse and then tried to mount. He never straddled El Ghaleb. He was thrown as soon as his foot touched the stirrup. And while he was lying on the ground, Yussuf sat on his head, holding him down, and Omar on his belly, for the Gipsy showed fight.

I walked over to El Ghaleb. The horse, having been beaten, showed no desire to run away, and I whispered into his ear—

"*Tchok Yasha Padishahim.*"

Then I mounted the horse and rode around the garden. When I brought him back to the pasha, the soldiers were busy preparing for the bastonade which Zulfikar was to receive.

Yes, effendi, the pasha paid me the price I asked for the horse, and after I had told him of the words which would induce El Ghaleb to permit any man to mount him, he sent me safely back to my father's *han* with an escort of two mounted *yanitchari*, for there were robbers in the mountains South of Sarajevo before the Austrians came.

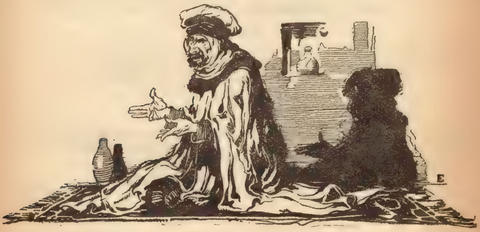
Zulfikar never forgot the bastonade he received at the hands of the pasha's soldiers and that I had outwitted him and deprived him forever of the pasha's protection. He swore vengeance, but I paid no heed then, and not now. I was young then, effendi, and reckless and not afraid of any man.

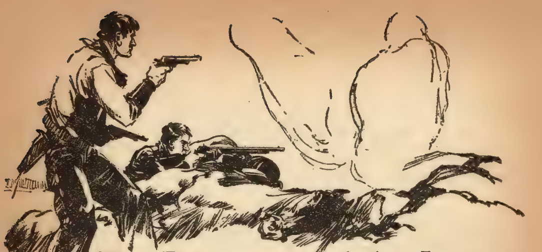
I am an old man now, and poor, it is true, compelled to smoke bad cigarets. I thank thee, effendi, this will be the last one, for my tale is ended. But still, I am not afraid of any man. Nor am I afraid of Zulfikar who has sworn that he would cut my throat. He, too, is old now, and the Servians have made him a policeman here in Bosna Seray. I see him once ever so often, but I stand my ground for, as I said, effendi, old as Mehemet Ali might be, he is not afraid of any man.

There sings the muezzin from the minaret, it is time for the evening prayer.

"*Allah il Allah, Mohamet rassoul Allah!*"

Inshallah, effendi. Be quick and lock the door, here comes Zulfikar, and he carries a saber on his belt!





The Parson and the Injun

by Albert William Stone

THE "Parson," who had been sent out to round up horses that had strayed the night before, came back to camp with a prisoner—a young Comanche who rode his horse with the indescribable grace that only *El Serpent* can command. The young brave was sullen, as he doubtless had reason to be; but his sullenness was tinged with a certain dignity. He had been relieved of his war knife and his fourteen-foot lance; his captor was carrying both, as well as the bow that went with the quiver of arrows slung on the young savage's back.

Milt Culpepper, the trail boss, surveyed the captive with a coolly appraising eye. Culpepper was a veteran of the plains, and knew Indians from scalp-lock to moccasins.

"Some ketch," he observed. "From his paint, he's scoutin' fer a war party. This trail is gettin' to be about as safe as the Bad Lands fer a white man. Where did you round him up?"

The Parson, who answered to the name of Hank Blossom, if necessary, jerked his thumb over one lanky shoulder.

"Seen his feathers stickin' up over the edge of an arroyo," he explained. "Stalked him when he wasn't lookin'. Didn't seem to want to talk, so I brought him in."

"Instead o' trimmin' him fer his hair right where you got him, I reckon."

The trail boss was being sarcastic. The parson was notoriously averse to taking human life, even of the ubiquitous Comanche.

"Well, Sully Pratt'll try to make short work of him when he sees him. Sully's broodin' some ever since he found his brother layin' under that mesquite bush, scalped. He don't seem to have no love fer an Injun, 'specially a Comanche."

At a gesture from the Parson the prisoner slid off his horse, and straightway became the personification of awkwardness. Even his face was immediately overcast with a slovenly expression. His short, squat figure slouched incredibly. Across his naked back the quiver was nearly full of arrows. They were cruelly pronged. His trunk was smeared and streaked with bright vermilion, his countenance blackened hideously. His coarse hair shone with recent greasing, and a war bonnet of curling buffalo horns and eagle feathers gave him an aspect that was both picturesque and repulsive.

"Speak," ordered Culpepper in Spanish. "What has the red brother to say for himself?"

Several lean, bronzed cowboys had gathered about to look at the Indian. Most of them wore two six-shooters, although here and there was a man with only one. Bowie knives were a part of every man's visible armament. Battered sombreros, unbuttoned vests partly covering flannel shirts, leather *chaparejos*, short boots and huge spurs made up the general sartorial equipment. All were smoking cigarets.

The Indian's countenance was immobile as a statue's. His beady, black eyes, however, roved about as if seeking an avenue of escape. They were sharp as a hawk's and cruel as a wolf's. The morning sun shone brilliantly on his feathered plumage, and paint besmeared body. His arms and shoulders bulged with great muscles.

"It will not be well for the red brother if he does not speak," threatened the trail boss. "The white man comes peacefully into the country, seeking trade only. But your people lie in wait to plunder and to kill. The red brother was caught lurking on the trail. He is dressed for the warpath. Speak. What have you to say?"

The Indian was silent, his beady eyes watchful. He was young, not more than twenty. If he understood a word of the language in which Culpepper was addressing him, he gave no sign. The circle of cowboys crowded closer, each man with his hand carelessly close to the butt of his gun. In the trail days of Texas the Indian was legitimate prey. These men obviously wanted to be in at the kill.

In both directions thousands of cattle stretched, grazing. They would not be surfeited before ten o'clock, and it was now less than nine. Across the Pecos River on the left, the numerous escarpments of the Staked Plain reared themselves like the walls of a fortified city. On every hand were thickets of *tornilla* and mesquite. A little farther up the trail the cattle were belly deep in the tall juicy jacaton.

Two more cowboys dashed up at this juncture—swing riders. One of them, at sight of the Indian, jerked his six-shooter with a movement disconcertingly swift and leveled it at the captive. It was Sully Pratt.

"Spread, you gents," he ordered crisply, waving the revolver. There was a deadly chill in his voice. "I don't want to hit anybody but that —— Injun."

They scattered, including Culpepper. Sully Pratt was a product of the plains, who lived, and hoped to die by the law of the West. His natural hate for an Indian had been intensified by the cruel murder of his brother, several weeks before. The way clear, he brought the big six gun slowly to a bead. The young Indian did not deign to move.

But the gun was not discharged after all. The Parson, who was standing close to the spot where the two horsemen had reined in, had reached up a long arm and knocked Sully Pratt's hand upward. The cowboy looked down, his gray eyes cold as ice.

"That there's my prisoner, Sully," the parson explained. "I'm holdin' him fer other purposes. Besides, he's jest a boy, savvy? I don't reckon you aim to be killin' a helpless boy, do you?"

"Boy!" Sully Pratt spoke through his teeth. For all his coolness, he was evidently raging within. "He's an Injun. Which he's likewise a Comanche. I'll kill him like I would a rattler. Don't you try fer to stop me, Hank Blossom, or I'll let daylight through you, too!"

Like a flash his arm, which had remained elevated, came down. The revolver spat fire. But the shot went harmlessly into the ground, so close to the horse upon which the cowboy was astride as to cause the startled animal to plunge. The Parson had, with a movement as quick as Sully Pratt's own, seized the other's wrist and jerked it downward.

Now he held the wrist in a grip of steel, while their eyes met and held. There was murder in Sully Pratt's orbs. He did not struggle.

"I'll get you fer this," he said quietly.

"Any time," returned the Parson affably. "Any time, Sully. I reckon I'm at your service. But don't you hurt that Injun while he's my prisoner."

He dropped the wrist and walked deliberately to where the young savage was standing. From around his waist, where it was coiled, he unwound his horsehair lariat and proceeded to bind the captive's hands. Then he turned to Culpepper.

"I'm thinkin' maybe we kin git him to talk after a while," he remarked. "If it's all the same to you, I'll keep an eye on him ontil we make camp tonight."

The trail boss knew that he had been witnessing something that would probably result in death for somebody. But his manner was as cool as though the Parson had merely remarked upon the state of the weather. He nodded toward the Indian's superb Spanish horse.

"Stick him on his hoss an' tie his feet together underneath," he suggested. "Tonight maybe we kin git something out of him. Anyway, while we got him in camp, it ain't likely the Injuns will tackle us. They'll try to steal him first."

"Yes, an' if you'll take my advice, you'll fix him so they won't git to steal nothin' but an Injun carcass without no hair attached," remarked Joe Ward, a thick-set cowboy in the surrounding group. "Them Comanches is the slickest night thieves in the world."

The trail boss looked at him.

"You savvy Injuns pretty well, don't you?"

"Do I?" Ward spat. "I savvy 'em well enough to know that the only safe Comanche is a dead one. An' even then I wouldn't trust one of the sons o' guns."

"Then I reckon you better take this here redskin in charge," Culpepper ordered. "You're detailed to keep an eye on him tonight. If they's anybody able to spot an Injun in the dark, it oughta be you."

To insure temporary peace, at least, the trail boss ordered Sully Pratt on point duty, up where the mess wagon, with its soiled and patched canvas, creaked and shrieked its way across the prairie. The Indian captive was kept at the rear, under the eye of Joe Ward. The Parson, apparently satisfied with the arrangement, performed his duty as horse-wrangler for the day.

AT TWO o'clock the herd, which had been resting after its noon watering in the river, began to graze. They kept it up until twilight, when they were herded into close circular formation and bedded down for the night.

All through the day Joe Ward had, at intervals, plied his savage charge with questions delivered in English, Spanish and various brands of polyglot with which the cowboy was familiar. But the young Indian preserved a dignified silence, not showing by even the flicker of an eyelash that he gathered the white man's meaning.

The wagon was drawn up and the rope corral strung for the night herd of horses. The cook built a huge fire and busied himself in preparation for supper. He drew water for the coffee out of a spigot from one of the barrels lashed to the side of the mess wagon. His cooking utensils he recovered from the untanned rawhide that swung underneath. Cowboys rode in and helped themselves to tin pans of sizzling bacon and beans. They wolfed down soda biscuits and drained big tin cups of black coffee. Then, detailed on guard duty for the first two hours of night, they rode forth again, their places being shortly taken by the men they relieved.

The young Indian steadily refused all offers of food. He had been taken down from the horse, his feet securely trussed together, and placed in a reclining position on the ground, his head propped against a saddle blanket. His blackened face was more hideous than ever in the firelight. At a proffer of water in a tin cup, however, he unbent enough to swallow a few mouthfuls. His eyes were constantly alert.

Culpepper and the Parson conferred in low tones, back of the mess wagon. Sully Pratt had come in, sullenly eaten his supper, and departed on guard duty.

"I don't want no trouble between you two boys," the trail boss was saying. "Of course, it ain't right to kill even an Injun after you've got him helpless. But we got to remember that Sully ain't got no call to love a Comanche. Maybe if you or me had seen what Sully seen——"

"I'll stick around, if it's all the same to you," said the Parson. "I didn't say nothin' before, Milt, but they's a lot of Injun sign around. Looks right fresh to me, too. Shouldn't wonder but what they're figgerin' on attackin' us one o' these times. Thought maybe we could get somethin' out of this young redskin."

"We couldn't do it by any pink tea method," the trail boss declared. "I don't like his looks. These boys of mine are all old stagers, an' kin take care of themselves ag'in four or five times their number in Injuns, even Comanches. But if the war party is a thousand or so—an' I've heard they're gittin' up a reg'lar army to clean the trail—that's another story. I reckon I'd better keep the outfit on duty tonight. We'll have to git in some sleep when the herd lays down tomorrow mornin'."

The Parson approved. He offered to relieve Joe Ward in his watch over the captive, but Ward scornfully refused all aid.

"I reckon I don't need no help to look after no ornery, no-account Comanche," he declared. Whereupon the trail boss sent the Parson out on scout duty. The horse herd, especially, would have to be watched closely, for the Comanche steals horses first and goes on forays for human life afterward.

The night was a perfect one, cool and with a light breeze. The cowboys rode herd much as usual, save that they did their nocturnal humming in subdued tones. Cigarets were lighted in carefully cupped hands. The men relieved each other for two-hour shifts; the extra ones rode in a wide circle, within sight and hearing of the camp, but far enough away to encounter any creeping Indians, if they were lucky.

Throughout the night the Indian lay without moving, the dying fire reflecting between the half-closed lids of his black eyes. He was not asleep; but he was so motionless that Joe Ward caught himself nodding several times. His efforts to engage the captive in conversation continued to be unavailing. The snort of the horses within the rope corral became a sort of symphony in the cowboy's ears. The occasional soft bellow of a steer registered faintly upon his consciousness.

HE CAME to himself with a start as two riders came up to the fire and dismounted, preparatory to turning their horses into the corral. One of them was the Parson. The other was Culpepper.

"Where's the Injun?" demanded Culpepper.

Ward rubbed his eyes. The Indian was miraculously gone.

"Why, doggone it, he was there jest a minnit ago!" he exclaimed.

He leaped to his feet and stared at the spot where the captive had been. Only the matted grass at the side of the blanket roll testified to his recent presence.

With an oath Ward sprang into the darkness outside the circle of fire, pulling his six-shooter as he ran. The other two men followed suit. Fifty yards away they discerned two dim forms rising upright from the ground. The three guns spoke simultaneously, streaking the gloom with flame. But the shadowy forms had melted into the darkness. Followed a double gallop of unshod hoofs over the prairie. Too late the trio bethought them of their own horses. In a moment they were riding pell-mell through the mesquite, shooting as they galloped.

Fortunately, they were far enough from the sleeping herd to preclude likelihood of a stampede. A few minutes' mad galloping carried them far enough away to convince them that they were being uselessly reckless.

When they returned empty-handed to the camp-fire, the cook had thrown some wood on it, and the resulting blaze lighted the ground all around. Culpepper pointed to the spot where the Indian had lain.

"There's what's left of Hank's lariat," he growled. "Slashed through. Pretty slick work, all right." He turned to the crestfallen Ward. "I thought you was the gent that understood Injuns so well?"

The cowboy for once had nothing to say. The episode was outside the pale of even his vast experience. The trail boss spoke rapidly.

"This means an attack, sure as shootin'. In less than two days, boys. Somebody's got to make it to Fort Sumner an' bring back the dragoons. I'll call fer volunteers right away."

The Parson had bitten off a huge chew of twist tobacco and was working his jaws slowly. His sombrero was shoved to the back of his head, revealing his corrugated forehead with a few straggling hairs, streaked with gray, falling across it.

"We kin save time by startin' now," he remarked to Joe Ward. "Git your hoss, Joe. It lacks about two hours of daylight, an' we'll have to lay hid all day, like as not."

Ward was feeling distinctly *de trop*. He stared at the Parson with positive gratitude in his eyes. To be permitted to accompany the Parson on such an errand after the fool he felt he had made of himself, was seized upon as an honor. Likewise, he signalized his elation by seizing the Parson's great hand and wringing it.

"It's a dangerous mission, boys," Culpepper cautioned. "But I don't know of anybody I'd trust to see it through more than you, Hank." Ward winced. "Straddle your hosses an' vamose. An' fer ——'s sake don't let no prairie grass grow under your feet while you're travelin'. My hair feels loose."

The trail boss knew Indians.

II

FORT SUMNER was a hundred and fifty miles distant. The two travelers covered twenty-five miles by daylight, when they sought cover in the low hills that flanked the Pecos. At the first assault of darkness they roused themselves, ate cold bacon and biscuits without coffee, and resumed their journey. The Indian, they knew, does not attack at night save in rare instances. By daylight they had done eighty miles more, but when the darkness had faded they discovered themselves on a part of the trail that bisected a vast expanse of flat, treeless plain. The nearest hills were ten miles farther on.

"I reckon we've got to keep goin'," the Parson drawled.

He was not deceived by the peacefulness of the scene. The sky was cloudless, the sun blazing in all its heated glory, drenching the drab plain in gold and bathing the thickets of mesquite and chaparral. Not another living thing was in sight, although during the night they had startled a sleeping herd of buffalo and precipitated a thunder of hoofs that would have drowned out the roar of Niagara.

At the left of the trail, a quarter of a mile distant, was the Pecos River. It was effectually hidden from view by perpendicular, sharply cut banks ten to twenty feet high. Already the horizon was dancing and palpitating in the heat.

Joe Ward shaded his eyes and stared to the westward, where a low hill rounded itself into the skyline. He was, as revealed by the broad daylight, a powerful, deeply bronzed man of thirty-five, clad in the usual sombrero, flannel shirt, short boots and *chaparejos*. His ragged vest hung open, and a blue cotton neckerchief partly shielded his corded throat. Besides the six-shooters in his holsters, he carried a Henry repeating rifle across the pommel of his saddle. The Parson was similarly accoutered.

"That there hill would be a blame good place to stand off a bunch of Injuns," Ward remarked.

The Parson nodded abstractedly. Like his companion, he was bronzed and powerful, but with a strength unrevealed by the general deceiving looseness of his physical construction. He rode his horse with stirrups thrust stiffly out before him, his lanky body swaying easily to the movements of the animal. His deeply lined face was so grave as to be almost lugubrious. The Parson's sobriquet came from several sources. He rarely smiled, almost never laughed, and at times displayed an almost womanish distaste for the rough horseplay of his associates. Yet, when occasion arose, he was a fighting man of bravery and resource, cool under pressure of the most desperate emergency, and the champion tobacco-chewer of the outfit.

He was chewing now, steadily and ruminatively. He glanced at the hill indicated by his companion, although, as a matter of fact, he had noted it some time before.

"We're shore takin' a long chance out here without no cover," continued Ward. He had recovered his lost *sang froid*, obviously. "You can't never tell when they's Injuns lurkin' around. There ain't anything more all-around sneakin' than an Injun. You ought to've let Sully Pratt shoot that there redskin you captured, Hank. That would have meant one less of the cussed, ornery, murderin' skunks to bother with, anyhow."

The Parson spat thoughtfully.

"Injuns ain't so bad when you git to know 'em," he observed. His companion snorted.

"Ain't so bad as what? An earthquake?"

"An Injun is the most reeligious critter they is," the Parson went on.

"Reeligious!" Ward turned in amazement. "Injuns reeligious?" He laughed scornfully. "They believe that an Injun that don't git scalped goes to the Happy Hunting Ground, and that if he does git scalped he ain't even worth buryin', if that's what you call reeligious. A scalped Injun is jest carrion fit fer crowbait, accordin' to an Injun's reeligion."

The Parson was silent, and Joe Ward continued, as he flecked a horse fly away from his mount's ears:

"An Injun is the most ontrustworthy skunk they is. He'll pretend to be your friend, an' then scalp you when your back's turned. An Injun ain't got no conscience. Whatever he wants he takes, if he kin git it. If he gits it, he's been right, he thinks. If he don't, he's jest onlucky. You saved that young buck's life the other day, all right. An' Sully Pratt's down on you, maybe he'll take a pot shot at you some day. You've got a white man down on you, but you ain't made no friend out of that Injun. He'll stick a knife into you if he gits a chance, mark my words."

"He didn't stick none into you when you went to sleep, I notice."

The loquacious Ward was effectually squelched once more.

"I reckon he was too much set on gittin' away," he muttered. "This sure is a wonderful mornin', speaking from a weather standpoint."

"Don't turn your head, Joe," the Parson said suddenly. His tone was low. "But head your hoss casual-like toward that there hill you been talkin' about. Easy, now."

The other's poise became rigid, and the muscles of his neck swelled visibly.

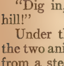
"What d'ye see?"

"Nothin', maybe." The Parson spoke quietly. "Somethin' stickin' up above the edge of the river bank. Maybe it's a sprig o' cactus. Maybe somethin' else. Some ways you look at it, it might be a feather."

He was observing the projection above the bank out of the corner of his eye. The object moved slightly, he thought. Then it disappeared. The Parson did not raise his voice.

"Dig in, Joe, an' ride like —— fer that hill!"

Under the sharp rake of the huge spurs the two animals sprang forward as if released from a steel trap. In something less than a dozen heart-beats they had covered a hundred yards in the direction of the hill.



ALMOST at the same instant the peace of the morning was shattered by a bedlam of blood-curdling yells, shot through with the terrifying falsetto that characterizes the Indian shout of triumph everywhere. The two men looked back, and beheld a band of fifty or more Comanches racing toward them out of a draw that cut through the river's bank. They were superbly mounted, crouched low on their horses' withers and plying quirt and heel madly.

As the white men had been riding all night, their mounts were anything but fresh. Those of the Indians were obviously anything but tired. Doubtless they had been riding leisurely up the arroyo cut by the river, hidden from sight by the deep banks. The uneven race continued about twenty seconds, when one of the foremost Indians fired a rifle and Ward's horse plunged to its knees. The rider went sprawling over its head.

Instantly the Parson reined in so sharply that his horse was jerked to its hind legs, pawing. The Parson sprang from the saddle. Ward's horse, shot through the heart, was kicking feebly. Without losing an instant of time the Parson pulled his huge bowie knife from its sheath and plunged the keen blade into his own animal's throat, severing the jugular vein. Blood spurted over his hand in a crimson stream.

Ward's horse, it developed, had fallen at the edge of a buffalo wallow, and Ward now lay within the depression. It was two or three feet deep and eight or nine feet in diameter. While his own stricken animal was sinking to its knees, the Parson crouched behind the dead horse, effectually shielded from the rifle and arrow fire of the oncoming Indians, and brought his repeating Henry rifle into play. It belched a stream of lead from its capable muzzle, and three of the racing savages tossed their hands into the air, uttered wild yells and toppled to the ground. Their horses instantly whirled and galloped back the way they had come. The remaining Comanches reined in and began to retreat.

Ward groaned.

"I got that bullet in the laig, I reckon," he said. "It hurts like thunder, an' I can't seem to handle it. Take a look, will you, Hank?"

The Parson looked swiftly. "You got it in the fleshy part of the calf," he reported. "It ain't goin' to interfere none with your shootin', yet. Jest pull yourself up here an' onlimber your Henry. They'll be comin' ag'in in a minnit."

The Parson's horse's dying convulsions had ceased. With calm strength its owner grasped it by one of its hind legs and yanked it half way around, so that it lay parallel with the other animal. The beleagured men now had a complete breastworks. The Parson shoved his rifle across the warm body and squinted through the sights.

"Come along as soon as you want to," he invited. "We'll get a few of you, anyhow. You all right, Joe?"

His tone was solicitous, his manner detached. Ward groaned again and painfully wriggled himself to a position behind his dead horse, thrusting his rifle into place. The injured leg sprawled out behind him. The putty pallor of his bronzed face was already being replaced by the surge of fighting blood.

"All right," he muttered with a stifled oath. "Hope you're satisfied now, Hank. You see what your blame foolishness over that Injun has done fer us."

"I'm right sorry about that busted laig," the Parson returned. "It's makin' you sort o' peeved, I reckon." He did not take his eyes from the Indian band, which had come to a stand cunningly out of range, and was conversing with many gesticulations.

Ward groaned again.

"You don't give Injuns credit with bein' smart," he persisted. "After that young buck got away, they figgered somebody'd maybe be sent to Fort Sumner fer help, after they'd been so nervy. When Comanches git that bold, white men better keep their eyes peeled. If——"

"Oh, dry up," interrupted the Parson good-naturedly. "I'm busy watchin' them redskins."

In the distance the attackers were a picture of grace as they sat on their superb mounts, their war bonnets waving in the breeze. Round-muscled, thick-set Indians, they were, with chests like barrels and shoulders that bulged with hard muscles. Their heavily greased hair glistened in the sun. Save in times of war, the Comanche cared little for ornamental head dress; but these warriors' heads were adorned with curving buffalo horns and eagle feathers. The faces of some were painted a dull bronze, others a jet black. Their bodies, naked to their breech-clouts, were streaked liberally with vermilion.

Their horses, likewise, were naked except for bridles and hair-ropes, the latter loosely knotted around their barrels, over their withers. The Parson had taken advantage of the lull to reload his weapon, and now held it ready for instant use.

Presently another concerted yell split the air.

"Here they come, Joe," announced the Parson. "Hold your fire ontil they git right close. Then let 'em have it."

The band charged toward the buffalo wallow at breakneck speed. Just within range they turned suddenly and began to race in a circle, sending in a shower of bullets and arrows from every side.

The two white men were now treated to a sight they might have admired under other circumstances. The Comanche had the reputation of being the most skilled horseman of all the North American Indians. With incredible dexterity, each savage shoved his bent right knee into the slack of his hair-rope, seized the bridle and mane in his left hand, curled his left heel tightly into his horse's left flank and dropped out of sight on the right side, with only a hand and foot visible to the besieged men.

Thus hanging, the racing Comanches fired their weapons from under the horses' necks, the circle gradually drawing in. The two cowboys were forced to whirl and shoot in several directions, especially as the attackers circled behind them. But as was ever the case with such men, they remained cool under the shower of bullets and arrows, picking their targets as carefully as though shooting in a friendly contest. They wasted no lead, and in less than a minute their well placed shots had knocked over six horses, leaving as many Indians writhing on the ground. The circle broke and the Indians dashed away toward the river.

The carcasses of the horses were studded with arrows. The men reloaded rapidly.

"You murderin' coyotes!" shouted Ward, shaking a bronzed fist at the band, which had again drawn up just out of range.

In the heat of the attack he had temporarily forgotten his wounded leg. The Parson laughed aloud, for the first time in days.

"Them Injuns done some right good shootin'," he remarked. "How they kin' hang by their toe nails an' handle their guns an' bows too, beats me. They must be tolerable mad, jest about now, to think they ain't been able to kill us yet."

The sun was rising higher and blazing down with pitiless heat. Already, under pressure of the excitement and strain, the Parson was conscious of a mounting thirst. They had no canteens, having expected to remain close to the river on their journey. As for Ward, his wounded leg was sending the thirst of fever through his veins, parching his tongue and throat with its insistent demand.

"I'm awful dry, Hank," he said. "We got to git to water, some way."

"Not while daylight lasts," the Parson said with conviction, "Them redskins won't take their ugly eyes off us while they kin see. It's a quarter of a mile to the river, Joe. Too bad. I reckon you're right thirsty."

"I reckon I am," replied Ward with a groan. "If you hadn't done like you done with that young Comanche buck, we wouldn't be in this here cussed mess."

The Parson was peering over the side of his horse.

"Blamed if they ain't comin' ag'in!" he exclaimed. "This time they'll do their all-fired durndest."

There was no time for further comment. The racing circle was once more closing in, and a shower of bullets and arrows were flying. The bedlam of savage yells would have struck terror to hearts less stout. By the time the circle had again been broken the rifles of both men were empty, and the parson was tugging at one of his revolver holsters. Howling their disappointment, the attackers retreated, and the cowboys wiped the pouring sweat from their faces with grimy hands. More Indians lay on the ground, and several additional horses had been bowled over, testifying to the expert marksmanship of the white men.

The strain was telling on Ward. His face had gone pallid under the bronze, and he lay panting, a bad sign. The Parson pulled off his neckerchief and wiped his companion's countenance with it.

"Nine dead Injuns out there, besides eight wounded ones," he said encouragingly. "An' a dozen hosses. They can't stand much more of it. They wasn't more'n fifty to start with."

"That's all," groaned Ward. "Jest fifty blood-thirsty Injuns ag'in two white men, two dead hosses an' a buffalo waller. I'd rather fight a million Injuns, though, than this cussed thirst."

"We'll crawl over to the river after dark," the Parson promised. "Jest keep a stiff upper lip, Joe."

MEN of softer fiber would have perished under the fearful assault of the sun that day. To these men it was all in a day's work. Save for his wounded leg, even the complaining Ward might have shown greater fortitude under the strain.

The Parson's right arm was covered with the dried blood of his dead horse, and his face was a study in filth and perspiration. Ward was in similar plight. Yet the current of life ran strongly within them, despite their thirst and the fact that they had eaten nothing since the night before.

The Parson reached up and unbuckled the saddle bag of his dead horse, extracting a slab of raw bacon and a couple of biscuits.

"It'll make us thirstier than ever, but we got to eat," he remarked, tossing part of the food to Ward.

"I don't want nothin' to eat," Ward demurred with a curse. "All I want is water."

Weary to the point of exhaustion, they remained in the wallow through the long hours of the super-heated day. Ward sank into a kind of stupor, but the Parson remained watchfully alert. The sun was sinking toward the fringe of western hills before the Indians again showed signs of activity. In the meantime they had alighted from their horses and were squatting on the ground in a circle, evidently holding a council of war. A painted figure was in the center of the circle, gesticulating.

Long distance sharp shooting heralded the resumption of the attack. The Indian is cunning, but not subtle. The Parson roused Ward with difficulty by shouting in his ear and shaking him by the shoulder.

"They're gittin' ready to make a charge," he said. "It'll be the last one today, I reckon. Git your rifle up."

Ward struggled wearily to the proper position. Four abreast the Indians came on with blood curdling yells. The front rank began shooting. The beleagured men waited until the Indians were well within range, and then fired. Two of the foremost Indians toppled out of their seats, followed in an instant by the other two. The second rank suffered a like fate, their horses falling back on their haunches and plowing up the dust with their hoofs.

But it was clear that the Comanches had determined upon a desperate expedient this time. The third rank split, apparently by previous arrangement, and circled in opposite directions. The maneuver was unexpected and confusing. The Parson shot one of the circlers out of his saddle; but before he could fire again the other three were behind him, pouring in a shower of arrows with the speed only a Comanche can show. The Parson felt a sharp sting in his left shoulder, and the pronged point of an arrow protruded through the muscles. At the same instant Ward fell forward on his face, an arrow in his back.

The Parson whirled, gun at shoulder, and fired. Something struck him in the breast with stunning force. He had the impression of being the center of a rapidly revolving circle with the two dead horses clinging blurringly to the edge. He recovered himself and squinted through the sights of his rifle.

Before him the black, hideously painted countenance of a savage suddenly materialized.

The curving buffalo horns and streaming eagle feathers of the head dress were awry. The Indian was not more than fifty feet away, riding straight toward the muzzle of the white man's gun. The Parson's finger pressed the trigger even as he saw the arrow leave the string of the savage's bow, and his ears registered the twang.

Instinctively he jumped to one side. The rifle had jammed. With a yell of triumph the Indian came on, a second arrow already leaping out of its quiver. It flew straight for the white man's breast, but missed its mark only because the Parson, suddenly dizzy, fell forward on his face. The arrow buried itself to the haft in the carcass of the Parson's horse.

In an instant the savage had leaped from his horse and jerked out his war knife, and was running swiftly toward the fallen man. A long leap brought him astride the other's motionless body. He seized the Parson's long, tangled hair with a fierce grip, jerked his head cruelly backward and was about to slash the scalp at the hair roots, when something gave him pause. He was staring at the bronzed face of the white man.

He uttered a guttural exclamation and sprang to his feet, both hands held high. The other Comanches had closed in with the cessation of firing from the buffalo wallow, yelling in savage triumph. They paused at sight of their fellow warrior standing in the pit, astride the body.

A profound stillness ensued, broken only by the guttural voice of the savage in the buffalo wallow. He talked rapidly, using many gesticulations. There were some protests from the other Comanches, some of whom had already gained the ground in anticipation of the scalping of the other white man. But the warrior held them back with the force of his authoritive eloquence. Slowly they remounted and withdrew.

The Parson was not entirely unconscious. As in a dream he had felt the release of the clutch on his hair, and the thud of his head as it again struck the ground. The gallop of retreating hoofbeats was diminishing in his muffled ears. Followed a quiet space, during which he found himself wondering, in a detached sort of way, if the fire in his breast would ever cool. Then his head was again lifted; this time with almost womanly gentleness.

"Drink," ordered the guttural voice, in Spanish this time.

The cooling water laved the Parson's parched throat. In a moment he had revived sufficiently to push the receptacle—it was his own sombrero—away and point to the motionless form of Ward. The savage nodded and a moment later Ward, too, was gulping eagerly. The Parson, his back supported by the edge of the wallow, looked down at his breast, and plucked away the arrow that had pierced it. His senses told him that it was not a serious wound.

"The white men will go to the river," the Indian was saying. His horse stood a few yards distant, with ears pricked forward. There was no sign of the other Comanches. "Ta-wáh-que-nah will return after a time, with horses for his white brothers. Then they shall ride safely to the lodge of their medicine-chief. It is not necessary that they bring the white warriors of the fort for the protection of the herds of tame buffalo. Ta-wáh-que-nah, son of Eé-shah-kó-nee, has said it."

He walked awkwardly out of the pit and sprang upon his horse, in which position he immediately became a figure of rare grace. The gallop of hoofbeats died away. The sun went out of sight behind the hills as the Parson and Joe Ward limped to the river, where the latter bathed his wounded leg and drew in the evening air in great gulps. The world once more was looking rosy to Ward. The Parson had plucked the arrow out of his companion's back, revealing that it, too, had made but a flesh wound.

"It was your young buck," Ward asserted presently, lying back with his injured leg soaking in the current. "I seen that much. I reckon you'll claim, now, that an Injun ain't such an onappreciative skunk, after all. Well, it's the first time I ever knowed of one. There must be somethin' back of it. Who is Eé-shah-kó-nee, anyhow?"

"He's the chief of the Comanches," replied the Parson absently. "What makes me mad is, there wasn't no need of takin' this trip to Fort Sumner, judgin' from what our young Injun friend says. We've put in a day's fightin' fer nothin'. Milt Culpepper's outfit is as safe, now, as if they was all in church."

"Looks that way," Ward agreed. "We doggone near committed suicide by separating ourselves from the outfit, I reckon. The Injun didn't know who we was ontil he got a look at your face."

Daylight faded, and the soft Texas night came on, ushered in by twinkling stars. The Pecos murmured sleepily at the feet of the two cowboys. A coyote howled in the distance. The ears of the Parson were attuned to the sound of hoof beats, signaling the return of Ta-wáh-que-nah. His head was thrown back and his unkempt hair made a blur against the still faint glow at the west. Joe Ward roused himself enough to marvel audibly.

"A grateful Injun!" he exclaimed. "First time I ever knowed one to show gratitude, 'specially a Comanche. How do you figger it out, Parson?"

But the Parson, his eyes on the stars, was mumbling something incomprehensible to the untutored ears of his companion. Joe Ward snorted.

"That poetry you're recitin'?"

"Yes," replied the parson dreamily. "It's what some folks call the Golden Rule."

"Well, keep right on recitin' it," grunted Joe Ward.

NAVAL DUELISTS

by Eugene Cunningham

A SURPRIZING number of American naval officers have been killed in "affairs of honor." Of the thirty-six lieutenants whose names appear on the Naval Register in 1801, two, Stephen Decatur and Henry Vandyke, and of the 159 midshipmen, three, are later listed as "killed in a duel." It was the day of the code of honor all over the civilized world. The American Navy, cruising in Old World ports where the very term "republic" was a red rag, very often found it necessary to uphold the dignity of their young nation in the approved fashion.

In February, 1803, while the *Chesapeake*, *New York*, *John Adams* and *Enterprise* lay at Malta, some officers went ashore to the theater one evening. In the lobby was the secretary of Sir Alexander Ball, the Governor, a noted duelist. He had come in for the avowed purpose of "getting a Yankee for breakfast." It would seem that he used discretion in adding to his reputation, for he carefully selected Midshipman Joseph Bainbridge, a sixteen-year-old boy, as victim. Bainbridge, finding himself roughly jostled and seeing the secretary walk calmly away without apology, commented upon the incident to Lieutenant Stephen Decatur.

Back came the secretary and again jostled Bainbridge, remarking in a loud voice—

"Those Yankees will never stand the smell of gunpowder!"

Bainbridge instantly knocked him down and as soon as he could get up, the fellow challenged the boy. Decatur ordered the midshipman back to the ship and with an unpleasant smile began arrangement of details. As challenged party, the American made the terms.

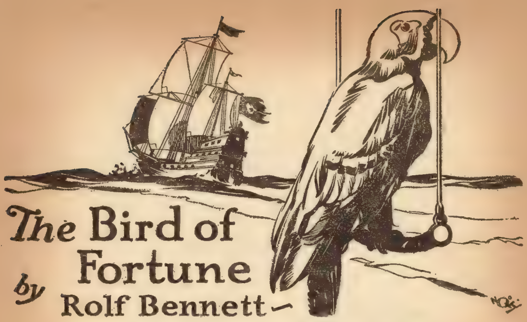
"Now," said Decatur, "we will go to the beach at sunrise tomorrow. There we will place our men back to back and at the word 'March!' they shall each march two steps and then whirl and fire. There shall be only the one word."

"My ——, man!" protested the English second. "That is clear murder!"

"*Your* man," retorted Decatur coolly, "is an experienced duelist. He has picked for his victim a young officer with no experience whatever. By my terms they are placed on as nearly equal footing as possible. However, sir, if you don't wish to fight in that way, I will take the place of the midshipman and meet your man at ten paces."

But the secretary preferred to fight a boy. So Decatur went back to the ship and brought Bainbridge on deck with a shipmate. Back to back he placed them, Bainbridge with an empty pistol. At the word "March!" Bainbridge took two steps, whirled and clicked his weapon. Through the whole night Decatur drilled him until he performed the evolution with mechanical precision and amazing speed.

At sunrise he was placed back-to-back with the noted duelist. At the word both stepped off two paces and whirled. But the young midshipman, drilled by canny Decatur, was quickest. He shot the secretary dead. In the circumstances, it was as much for the honor of the American flag as if the two participants had commanded men o' war.



The Bird of Fortune

by Rolf Bennett

Author of "The Sleeping Partner," "The Cask," etc.

WE WERE seated on a bench in the park, the seafaring man and I, watching an endless stream of luxurious motor cars pass by with their even more luxurious occupants. We had been sitting there quite a long time without exchanging a word, when the seafaring man suddenly took the pipe from his mouth and pointed with the stem at the procession of cars.

"I once knew a man," he said, "who could have bought up the whole gilded bunch. Yes, sir, cars, fur coats and their wads as well. Every mother's son of 'em. In solid cash—gold."

"He must have been very rich," I suggested.

"Rich! It wasn't—it wouldn't have been the word. Rich, b'gee! Well——"

The seafaring man paused, unable seemingly to find an adequate word to express such vast wealth.

"Yes," he went on, "he'd have been the richest man in the world, I reckon. And it all depended, so to speak, on a rubber plant, a pair of pants and a parrot. Well, it's a queer story."

I pressed him to tell it to me. After thoughtfully filling his pipe and lighting it, he smiled sadly and began:

This here man I'm telling you of was called Bill Hawkins. William Hawkins on the ship's papers, but Bill all the rest of the time. And you'd never have thought, not by looking at him, that he'd come so near to being a multi-millionaire. He was, well, just or'nary, and his language and manners, what he had of 'em—about the same.

Well now, one day Bill lost his ship. I don't know what made him late, but when he got down to the wharf on sailing day, she'd gone. So there was Bill, high and dry and with not a penny-piece to keep the —— from dancing in his pocket. Of course he tried to get a berth on some other ship, but they'd all signed-on their crews and there was nothing doing. He tried for other jobs, but his luck was dead out, as the saying is, and he slept that night under a shed.

Next day was just the same. Well, he was piled up good and proper, Bill was, and no two ways about it. And then somehow, maybe honestly and maybe not, Bill got hold of a rubber plant in a pot which he thought he might be able to sell for the price of a dinner.

So he went around all the streets by the docks trying to sell this here rubber plant, but nobody wanted it. Well, he was just thinking of heaving the blamed thing through the window of a police station and getting free board and lodging that way, when he saw a woman washing down a doorstep.

"Want to buy a rubber plant?" says he.

"No."

"The Bird of Fortune," copyright, 1925, by Rolf Bennett.

"It'll look fine on the parlor table," says Bill. "And you can have it for sixpence," says he.

"I ain't got sixpence to spare," says the woman, "but I'll give you a pair of my lodger's old pants for it."

"Right," says Bill, "maybe I can raise a few pence on the pants. Hand 'em over."

Which she did and Bill took them. They weren't bad pants neither, but the pattern made Bill feel dizzy. Checks they were, with black and white squares the size you see on a chess-board. Or pretty nearly. Well, he tried his darndest to sell them pants, Bill did, but nobody would have them. Maybe the pattern frightened them, but there it was and there was Bill, as far away from a dinner as ever.

At last a notion struck Bill. You or me'd have thought of it right at the start, but Bill was what you might call a bit of a dreamer. He felt in the pockets. Starboard pocket, nothing. Port pocket, nothing. Starn pocket, well, he found something then. And what do you think it was? Money?

No, sir. It was a pawn-ticket. A pawn-ticket showing that a feller called Brown had put a parrot up the spout for five shillings.

Now a pawnbroker, thinks Bill, wouldn't lend five bob on a parrot unless it was worth a mighty lot more. And, thinks he, if I take this here ticket to Moses, maybe he'll buy it and then he can sell the parrot right away.

So round goes Bill to the shop.

"Here," says he, slapping the ticket on the counter, "I want to sell this. Give me seven shillings and a tanner, and the parrot's yours."

AND then a queer thing happened. I don't suppose it's ever happened before, nor ever will again. The pawnbroker grabbed the ticket, dived under the counter and came up again with a parrot in a cage.

"Here," says he, dumping it on the counter, "you can take this blooming fowl away—and be slippy about it, too! It's eating me out of house and home," he says. "It's not a parrot, it's an ostrich by its appetite. I'll let the five bob go. Now clear out!"

Well, Bill could have almost cried. He'd reckoned on raising at least five bob, and all he'd got was a parrot with an appetite like an ostrich!

"Hanged if I wouldn't wring your neck for two pins," says Bill to the parrot. "You'd make a meal anyway," he says.

"Fifty south and forty west," sings out the parrot, cocking an eye at Bill.

"I don't want none of your back-answers," says Bill getting rattled. "You speak when you're spoke to," he says, "or I'll dump you into the harbor and all."

"Latitude and longitude, give me the word," screams the parrot.

"If you must talk, then talk sense. What do you know about latitude and longitude, you ugly lump of appetite?" says Bill.

"Fifty south and forty west in fathoms from the tree," croaks the bird.

"If you say that again, I'll fetch you one so's you won't know east from west," says Bill, for he was mighty hungry and in a nasty temper. "I know what I'll do with you," says he. "I'll sell you to some other fool of a sailor man. You ain't pretty nor intelligent as far as I can see, but you can scream and that's something."

Well, he went round the docks and at last he sold the parrot to the cook of a coasting boat called the *Golden Vanity*, for six shillings. And then, in a manner, his luck seemed to change, for next day he got a job unloading cargo from a tramp steamer. And that's how the riches came about."

I'll tell you. One day when he was working the donkey engine, a crane hook caught in Bill's pants and as good as ripped them off him. By good luck, Bill still had the pants he'd swapped the rubber plant for, so he put them on and thought no more about it.

When dinner time came, he left the ship and was walking along the docks when he heard someone shout—

"Hi, stop!"

He turned round and there was a man running after him and waving an umbrella. Bill waited for the stranger to come up, and when he did he could hardly speak for want of breath.

"What's your name?" he says at last.

"That's my business," Bill tells him. "What's yours?"

"Brown," answers the stranger.

"Why," gasps Bill, "then you're the man who pawned the parrot!"

"And you're the man," says the other, "who took him out. What I want to know is—where's that parrot?"

"There's lots of things you won't know," says Bill getting nasty, "and that's one of them."

"Now see here," pipes up Mr. Brown, "there's no need to take offense. No need at all," says he. "But I'll give you half-a-crown to know where that parrot is."

"Pass it across, mate," Bill tells him.

Which he did. And when Bill had counted the money and put it in his pocket, he tells how he'd sold the parrot to the cook of the *Golden Vanity*.

"Sold it! Great snakes, you sold it!" shouts the man. "Where is this ship, this sea-cook?" And he starts to dance up and down as if his feet were burning.

"I don't know where she is now," Bill tells him. "The *Golden Vanity* left port two days ago."

"Well, the other fellow he turns as white as a ghost and lets out a yell. And then he clapped both hands to his head and groaned like a man with a toothache on both sides.

"Was it a very valuable bird?" asks Bill, thinking that maybe he'd let it go too cheap.

"Valuable!" yells the other. "Why, that bird's worth millions! He's worth his weight in gold a hundred times over and then some more!"

"I wouldn't have thought it," says Bill. "I've never seen a more or'nary looking bird for a parrot. He couldn't even talk sense. And if you say he's worth a million, why, then I say you're the biggest liar between here and Hong-Kong."

"All right," answers the stranger, "we'll settle that afterward, but now you listen to me, you gummy-backed, perishin' fathead," says he. "That parrot was descended, in a manner of speaking, from Captain Kidd through my great-great grandfather. That parrot knows where the pirate's treasure is hid! Yes, sir, and modestly speaking that treasure must be worth millions in gold. Got that?"

"I don't understand it at all," says Bill. "It gets right past me," he says.

"NOW I'll tell you," says this Mr. Brown. "My great-great grandfather was one of Captain Kidd's pirate crew. He lived to be ninety and was the only man alive who knew where the Captain had buried all his treasure. And before he died, he told the secret to his son and made him swear he'd never write it down for fear some one might find it.

"And so it went on, from father to son, each one swearing never to write the secret down. There was a sort of fate about it, too, because not one of 'em ever succeeded in getting to the place where it was hid, either because they hadn't enough money, or because they were married, or because they thought they'd be happier without it. At last it came to my father's turn. He was given the secret and took the oath like the others had done.

"Now my father had a mighty bad memory and for months he worried himself night and day in case he should forget the bearings of Captain Kidd's treasure. But at last he hit on a plan, and this was it:

"He bought a parrot. And he taught this parrot the things he wanted to remember and was afraid he'd forget. But, mark you, he wasn't going to have that bird screaming out the secret to every one who listened. No, sir. He taught the bird not to say the bearings unless a certain word was spoken to him. The directions how far to dig south and west of a tree, yes. But the latitude and longitude, no, not unless the word was given. He took a lot of trouble with that bird, my father did, and it kept him happy in his old age.

"Of course he meant to give the word to me before he died. But the old chap was a long liver and he might be here now if he hadn't got mixed up in a railroad accident. I wasn't with him at the time, and so he died without passing on the word."

"It's a rum story," says Bill when the stranger looked as if he'd stopped talking. "But if the word's lost, what's the good of the parrot?"

"Wait a bit," says this Mr. Brown. "You want to go too mighty fast," says he. "I was in lodgings when the parrot was handed over to me, and I was scared to death that some one would open his cage and let him escape while I wasn't there. And so I decided to pawn him, for that seemed the safest place for him while I searched through the old man's papers to try and find the secret word. And then, one day while I was out, the blamed fool of a landlady gave you my pants with the ticket in them. Yes, sir, and that very evening I found the word."

"And what was it?" asks Bill.

"That's as maybe," says the stranger. "But I tell you what I'll do," says he, "if you get that parrot back for me, you shall go halves in the treasure when we find it."

"That sounds pretty good," says Bill. "Now I'll tell you," says he, "the *Golden Vanity* was bound for Dover and she ought to be there in another two or three days. If we go there by train and board her directly she comes in, I dare say I could persuade the cook to sell the bird back to us."

"Good for you," says this here Mr. Brown. "We'll go today and not take any risks," says he.

So off they went to Dover; and Bill couldn't think of nothing but the treasure and what he'd do with all the money when he got it. When they got to Dover they found the *Golden Vanity* had been delayed by bad weather and nobody couldn't say when she'd come in. So they waited and waited and at last she was sighted making for the harbor.

"My," says Bill, "she's had a proper hammering. She has that. Her bowsprit's broken and so is her fore top-mast. She's seen weather, she has."

Well, as soon as she'd made fast to a buoy in the harbor the crew started to come ashore in one of the boats. And a pretty battered and half-starved looking bunch they were, take my word for it. For the *Golden Vanity* had only been provisioned for a week, and she'd taken nearly fifteen days to do the trip. A madder set of men you wouldn't have found from Moray Firth to the Clyde by way of the Channel.

Bill and his partner went down to the quay and as soon as Bill saw the cook, he grabbed him.

"Look here," says he, "I want that parrot back. And I'll pay you what you gave me for it."

"What parrot?" says the cook, for, as I've told you, they were half-crazy with the sufferings they'd gone through. "What blinkin' parrot, mate?" says he.

"Why, the one I sold you, the one you gave me six bob for," answers Bill.

"And a darned poor six bob's worth at that," says the cook. "When we were that hungry we couldn't stand it no longer, me and the bosun tossed for who should eat the parrot and a mighty poor meal he made. All skin, bone and feathers," says he.

"AND that," remarked the seafaring man rising to his feet, "was the end of the parrot and likewise of Bill's hopes to become a millionaire. But he did come mighty near it."

"Tell me," I said. "You're Bill, aren't you?"

The seafaring man shook his head sadly.

"No," he said, "no, I'm not Bill. I'm the man who ate the parrot."

Wells, Wells, Wells!

A Complete Novelette

by

Thomson Burtis

Author of "Slim Grabs Some Grease," "Marston and Me," etc.

THIS is Slim Evans speaking; yes, First Lieutenant Slim Evans, of the Army Air Service. If I've got the wrong number, you can ring off any time. But bear in mind that although I'm still broadcasting from McMullen, Texas, I'm not the man you used to know.

The raggedy flyer who always was just two jumps ahead of the sheriff, financially speaking, has been displaced by a bloated plutocrat. An oil maggot, so to speak. I will always be only a step or two ahead of the law, I presume, in a moral manner of speaking, but at present I have no debts to overtake me, and the jailhouse will only get me on matters like attempted manslaughter or such diversions. By this time I presume you know me well enough to vouch for that yourself.

Anyway, it was a Saturday morning in the fall of the year, and I had just dismounted from my trusty airplane after having landed on the McMullen airdrome in a series of graceful leaps and bounds. For the benefit of any strangers who may be listening in and who may get a mental picture of a handsome clothes model alighting dignifiedly from his airplane, flicking a speck of dust from his highly polished boots and straightening his hundred-dollar uniform before he pushes up his goggles on his leather helmet and lights a monogrammed cigaret, I will endeavor to plant my astral eye ten feet away and watch myself getting out.

Behold the border patrolman who had just finished the early morning beat along the Rio Grande to Laredo. A tall, thin roughneck—by tall I mean several inches over six feet, and by thin I mean so little flesh that a pimple would make this flyer seem lopsided—crawls wearily from his cockpit. It being a very hot day, he is arrayed in breeches and boots, but above them nothing but an undershirt. This article of apparel, like his face, is spattered with oil. He wears no helmet, but has pushed his goggles up on tangled, windblown brown hair which is likewise somewhat greasy. On each side of the biggest nose ever seen short of an elephant there are two wild looking eyes, wild looking because they are surrounded with white circles where the goggles have protected them from the oil-throwing Liberty motor. This flyer starts plowing wearily across the sunbaked field on large, substantial, flat feet, followed by his observer, the Honorable George Hickman.

Well, enough of that. That's me, anyway. The main point is that as soon as I reached headquarters Pop Cravath, our baldheaded and excitable adjutant, flipped a telegram to me.

"Wire for you, Slim," he told me, so I

tabled all unfinished business and opened the same.

It was short, sweet and pregnant with possible meanings. It was from Hastings, Texas, and it read as follows:

> If humanly possible get here today. Vitally important. MALCOLM CARY.

A premonition of evil swept over me. If I recall it correctly, a premonition always sweeps, doesn't it? Anyway, I had a full-grown premonition and it behaved as all of the critters do.

Seriously speaking, I felt sort of tough about what that telegram might mean. That oil deal of Malcolm's and mine in Hastings always had seemed too good to be true, somehow, even if I had got twenty thousand bucks out of it already. Old Adam Burney was too slippery a proposition, for one thing, and— But I'm getting ahead of myself and tying myself in a knot.

I lost no more time than necessary. I can't pick up my feet and lay 'em down again as easily as a man who only wears a nine or a ten can. But I made a bee-line for the C. O.'s office, and in a few seconds I had let him read the telegram and was asking permission to make a week-end cross country trip to the booming oil town of Hastings.

Stocky little Cap Kannard grunted raucously, grinned behind his cigaret, and bowed.

"Go ahead," he chuckled. "Ah me! The cares of wealth! Don't forget you're due to sling another party soon, either."

I had given a slight *soirée* after getting my first winnings from Hastings, and that episode will always remain green in the memory of McMullenites. So I said—

"Any time you feel like giving the flight a couple of days off—twenty-four hours to reach a crisis and twenty-four to taper off—let me know. And thanks."

An hour later, my shabby but efficient De Haviland gassed and oiled and my own person washed, polished and highly perfumed, I was roaring along on my way to Hastings, across far-sweeping mesquite that seemed as though it never would end. It was a hundred and fifty miles, or a little more, and most of the trip was over that desert of chaparral. It was a course to make a pilot glue his good eye on his instruments.

While the trusty bomber is galloping along at a hundred miles or so an hour, northeastward to the oilfield, I may as well take your mind off the trip by letting you on the inside of what I thought that telegram might perhaps maybe possibly mean.

II

I MAYBE you remember Malcolm Cary. He's an old friend of mine. Anyway, when I met him he owned a little mine back of El Paso surrounded by hills. He had a lot of border bums working for him and was having a hard time to keep his head above water. Sleepy Spears, one of the McMullen flyers, and I dropped in one week-end just in time to help him out of a lot of trouble with his men. Just luck—we bulled around awkwardly and happened to bump up against the right solution of the whole shindig.

Malcolm was pretty grateful, particularly after a representative of some big Eastern firm dropped up to Hightown one day and bought the whole mine for fifty thousand bucks in cash money. Malcolm felt that he'd have been bumped off or gone into bankruptcy if it hadn't have happened that Sleepy and I helped him out, and I guess he was right.

A bit later Malcolm heard from a friend of his in Hastings, latest and greatest of the Texas oilpools. A wildcat well was going down several miles south of Hastings, some distance from where the pool was located, and in territory which was supposed to be dry of oil. However, the expert oil man who was drilling figured there was a chance the pool might extend that far.

This friend of Malcolm's, named Highheels Blake, was in a position to get inside information on how the formation was showing up as the well went down, and also to get a sample of the core when they took it. The core is simply a sample of sand which they take when down to the proper depth, and by chemical analysis—sometimes by even smelling it—one can tell whether there's oil there or not. Not how much, of course, but whether the well is going to be absolutely dry or not. Blake suggested that if his information showed that buying acreage around that well looked like a good investment, Malcolm use his money to do it and that they split fifty fifty.

It was a good proposition for this reason. Old man Howard, a rich, crusty old ex-cattleman of Houston owned over five hundred acres around that well—practically had it surrounded—and he held his acreage at a prohibitive price. Prohibitive until the well came in, if ever. Around a hundred and fifty an acre. It would have been madness for any man to gamble that much until he was —— certain there was oil there. Consequently, there were no buyers, but that wildcat well, called Blake Number 1, was watched with much interest.

Malcolm, feeling that he owed Sleepy and me something, made this offer, and we snapped it up pronto: If Blake said go ahead and buy, he'd invest five thousand apiece for Sleepy and me in sections of that acreage, taking the rest himself.

If we made money, we paid it back out of our profits. If Blake Number 1, after looking good enough to justify buying, flivvered and we lost that jack, Sleepy and I were to pay the five thousand back at the rate of fifty a month per each out of our salary. This arrangement took the proposition down to a mere friendly loan, and consesequently we didn't feel like beggars or objects of charity.

Sleepy was on leave, so Cary and I went down there to Hastings and, finally, we grabbed off that Howard acreage after fighting everybody in Hastings for it. Every lease-hound and big company man, scared to pay that amount for acreage before almost knowing there was oil there, was snooping around trying to get dope by hook or crook.

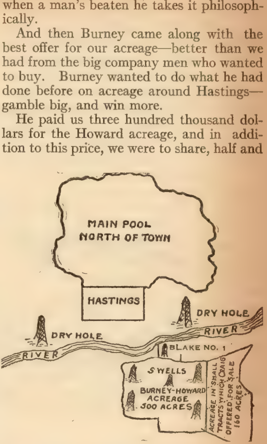
The most powerful of them was old Adam Burney, a multimillionaire oil gambler who'd made the Hastings field and made himself a fortune doing it. He had Hastings in the hollow of his hand, from the sheriff right on down through, and he tried to beat us by every method known to man, crooked and straight. He was scared of Malcolm, because Malcolm's a big, drawling Texan who's well known around the border as a two-fisted fighter who's bad to fool with.

Burney went so far as to frame Malcolm and get him out of the way in jail so that Burney would have a free hand. But finally I got the dope on the well, and the end of it was that I used my airplane to beat Burney's right hand man into Houston to grab the acreage. Burney's man used an airplane, too—a civilian passenger-carrying ship run by a fellow named Malley.

Well, then we were in possession of five hundred acres offset from Blake Number 1, which was flowing two thousand barrels a day. And Burney seemed to hold no grudge against us—as is the way of the oilfields, all is fair in a race for acreage, and when a man's beaten he takes it philosophically.

And then Burney came along with the best offer for our acreage—better than we had from the big company men who wanted to buy. Burney wanted to do what he had done before on acreage around Hastings—gamble big, and win more.

He paid us three hundred thousand dollars for the Howard acreage, and in addition to this price, we were to share, half and half with him, on all net profit made above this amount. His method was to sink wells on his own capital all around the tract, and after proving how much oil there was under it, sell out.



It's a good scheme if you hit. It's one thing to say that five hundred acres next to a paying well has probably got oil under it—and another thing to actually have a few paying wells on it in different places. The big companies are always willing to pay more in proportion for proved acreage than for acreage which is merely offset from pay territory. A pool has got to end somewhere—sometimes there'll be a gusher on one tract, and a dry hole not two hundred yards away from it.

This scheme made us almost partners of Burney, and it was strengthened by the fact that he had such an admiration for Malcolm Cary and Upton, who had drilled

Blake Number 1, that he made Malcolm general manager of the company to exploit the Howard acreage and put Upton in charge of all field operations.

YOU see where this left us—in partnership with one of the most powerful, unscrupulous, and crooked oil kings in the mid-continent field. But we felt that it was the right thing to do for two reasons: One, he'd made the best offer, from a financial viewpoint, and we stood to make a lot more money by stringing along with him. Secondly, brethren, we had suspended over him by a hair a large and heavy rock which we could bring tumbling down on his graceless gray head at any moment to crush him if he tried any of the well-known Burney bludgeoning on us.

In attempting to put us out of competition for the Howard acreage he'd been crooked as a corkscrew, as I've said, even going to the length of planting some dope in my ship, having the sheriff find it, and trying to put us both away for peddling narcotics.

He could get away with stuff like that, as I've said, because he'd made Hastings and ran it right down to the ground. But in beating the old scoundrel we'd found out a lot about him, through confessions of some of his underlings, and we felt that any time he tried to New York us he'd remember that all we had to do was open our mouths and break forth into a rash of speech—and then old Adam Burney would find himself looking at the world from the wrong side of chastely beautiful bars. So we took a chance.

BUT somehow or other, after I got that wire from Cary, I felt uneasy. No telling what funny dodge Burney might have worked out to beat us out of our shares of a tremendous deal. My share wasn't big, of course. My borrowed five thousand made me a partner in a little less than fifty acres of the whole tract. But if I'm beat out of so much as a nickel I'll squeal so loud that people think there's an abattoir starting somewhere in town.

And I figured that somehow Burney must have worked out a scheme to high-hat Malcolm and me without getting in trouble himself. Whenever Malcolm calls on me, I've found out from bitter experience there is trouble in the offing. Did I say "bitter experience?" That's a misnomer. No experience which has elements of excitement can be called bitter. Why try to kid you and myself? Trouble is one of the priceless sectors of this monotonous existence. It helps to kill time, as some bright Englishwoman once announced, for those that prefer it dead.

III

IF YOU have survived all this hot air I've been spilling, gaze down on Hastings as I spiraled down above it. It made me catch my breath every time I saw it from the air. Northward from the surging, crowded, hysterical boom town itself stretched a forest of derricks. The whole field was a gaunt, unbeautiful, oil-soaked wilderness—even the few mesquite trees drooped blackly, smeared with oil.

Thousands of men were working under the hot sun, and the crude roads which crisscrossed the territory were alive with every type of vehicle. The pipelines gridironed the whole tract, and the cone-shaped, unpainted derricks stretched starkly toward the sky.

I'll quit describing here. I've run out of words, not being a cross-word puzzle fan. Take one look at a used-to-be country village which has been augmented by crude shacks, tents and booths until every inch of space between and around the permanent buildings has been used up, and the streets of which are literally packed with a seething, excited, money-mad mob of crooks, roughnecks, lease-hounds, drillers and big company men and you have the panorama.

From a panorama it may be a sleeper jump to ex-corporal Malley, but as soon as I turned my eyes from the field itself and gazed down at the pasture lot which Malley had made into a flying field for his little ninety-horse-power Jenny I spotted the corporal. He was accompanied by only one man, and they were lying in the shade of the superannuated plane.

I had landed at that field twice before, of course, but this was special. Because I hadn't seen Malley since the night when my De Haviland and I beat this Jenny and Burney's man into Houston by very strong methods. Since Malcolm and I had been fought with every known brand of fire and brimstone, we'd used a bit of the same in making certain that we were first into Houston. I figured that maybe Malley might have something to say about it.

He did. Plenty of bad news, *caballeros*. A great sufficiency.

I dropped my big ton-and-a-half De Haviland across the fence, found out that I was going entirely too fast, and fishtailed it with the rudder so hard that it was traveling sideways like a trotting dog most of the way across the field.

I finally set her down on three points, but the motor was idling too fast and she went like blazes. I cut the switches and did a ground loop, which is simply a fast turn on the ground and, after dipping my right wing-skid into the ground, I finally brought up safely, covered with dust and filled with disgust.

I caught the motor while the prop was still turning, thus automatically cranking it, and taxied her around parallel with Malley's oil-spattered, saggy-wired, discouraged looking crate.

I had no sooner run out the gas and brought the twelve-cylinder Liberty to a well-earned rest than Malley hove alongside, accompanied by a stout, bloated, unshaven man dressed in a white shirt, baggy black trousers, and a sailor straw hat which was much the worse for wear. He hadn't shaved, apparently, since the year of the big fog, and his whole appearance was that of a man who had tried to drown himself in a sea of alcohol and had lost his nerve just before he finished the job.

"Well, this *is* a surprize—a really delightful surprize," said ex-corporal Malley. There was a smile on his triangular face, somewhat resembling the charming grin of a cat as it takes another bat at a crippled mouse.

"It's mutual," I told him as I offered him a selection of crushed cigarets.

Malley had been a corporal in the Air Service during the war, and when I first lit in Hastings with a loud thump he'd called my name, although I didn't know him. He was trying to make a go of carrying passengers in Hastings, but it was no go, because he was a rotten flyer in the first place and had a rotten—literally speaking—outfit in the second. He always looked sloppy and dirty and ill-cared-for, and his ship took after him. His face was rather peculiar—his forehead was very high and broad, and his cheekbones high. From there on down his face fell away in three directions: from each side, and from the front backward. His chin ended in a point, and it receded like an ocean when the tide's going out. His skin was dark from a combination of the sun and dirt. He looked so unwashed that I had the feeling that if he'd actually scrub himself hard he'd probably come to another pair of socks or something.

"MEET Mr. Graham," Malley went on, and it seemed as though he was trying to put deep significance into every word.

"Glad to know you," I told the other man.

Then, remembering the name, I took the bull by the horns and went on.

"Aren't you the fellow who was Malley's passenger when we had that little race into Houston a couple of months back? For the Howard acreage, I mean?"

"Yeah. And you guys shot the prop right off'n my ship, flyin' at night and all?" Malley started vindictively.

"Sure we did. But we didn't shoot you, and there were good fields underneath and a bright moon," I told him.

Meanwhile I was looking at the drink-sodden Graham in utter amazement. It didn't seem possible that this could be Burney's right hand man; the messenger he had sent to close a big deal for him, and the man who was reputed to personally handle Burney's largest deals for him.

"Well, that there's gonna be an expensive little trip fur you, Lieutenant!" stated Malley, his small eyes wavering from my face.

"Why?" I snapped him up. "Cary paid you for your prop, didn't he?"

"Sure. But that's got nothing to do with it," Malley told me.

Graham stood there without saying a word, his incongruous straw hat propped down over his eyes. Malley occasionally stole a look at him, as though for approval and a fresh store of courage.

"Why hasn't it?" I demanded.

"Because there's a lot more comin' to us than the price of a prop!"

"Why 'us?' " I enquired, with a glance at Graham.

"Never you mind," said Malley in some confusion. Apparently he'd slipped a cog in including Graham. "But you're a rich man now, you damaged me far more'n a propeller means, and it's gonna cost yuh just twenty five thousand bucks?!"

Just like that.

I did three mental tailspins, and my back hair waved gently with surprize. Then I gathered myself together, collected what few spare thoughts I had laying around, and finally cranked up my tongue and went into high.

"Listen," I commanded the greasy corporal, trying to hold his attention with a keen and glittering eye, "so you're up to blackmail, eh? Well, remember this. I don't know just how deeply you were concerned in the plot Burney hatched against Malcolm Cary and I. And I don't give a ——. Despite the fact that we're partners, in a manner of speaking, of Burney's now, at that time we were competitors, and he fought crookedly.

"By crooked work on his part you and Graham were miles ahead of us, to start, on that race for Houston, and when we shot you down out of the air we were fighting fire with fire, and you know it. So pipe down, Malley, get your feet on the ground, and for ——'s sake don't talk like an amateur thug!"

"Is that so?" sneered the unwashed, unshaven and unshorn Graham, speaking in a husky voice. "Pretty sure of yoreself, ain't yuh?"

"You're —— right I am!"

Here the weasel-like Malley seemed to find new concrete to pour into his backbone, so to speak, and started to get nasty forthwith.

"It certainly was providential, you droppin' in this way," he told me unpleasantly. "Layin' aside any arguments you may have, the cold fact is this. You ain't got no proof I was in with Burney at all. As a matter of fact, I wasn't. I was just a hired chauffeur tuh carry Graham here tuh Houston in my own ship. You come along and shoot me down out o' the air at night, damagin' my property, endangerin' my life and my passengers, and so on. And if you think I can't make it —— good an' hot fur you, both in and out o' the army, and make yuh dance until twenty-five thousand'll seem like a cent dropped in a well, you're badly mistaken.

"I'll sue yuh fur every brand o' damages a smart lawyer can think of, and I'll put you up fur court-martial in the army, and I'll plaster somethin' on your property tuh make it a cinch I can collect, and in general have you hoppin' around like a hen on a hot griddle with the sure prospect o' payin' through the nose at the end!"

Well, fellow worms, there were considerable sectors of sense in his brief remarks. The creed of the oil fields, unwritten but nevertheless widely lived up to, is to take your medicine and say nothing. But if Malley wanted to be nasty there was no proof that I knew of that he was anything but a hired man for that trip.

True enough, he had guarded my ship for me when Burney's representative had planted the dope in it, but that worthy had distinctly stated that Malley was not in the plot at all. It all came down to the point that Malley could make it —— uncomfortable for me. Malcolm had paid him five hundred dollars in cash for his propeller and inconvenience, which was five times what the damage was worth—but that item about endangering his life and property would go big with a jury, especially inasmuch as I was reputed wealthy.

Finally I said—

"Is this twenty-five thousand supposed to come from me personally, or from Cary, Upton and I as a combination?"

"From the three of yuh, or any way yuh want to work it."

I stood and looked at him for a moment, and then at his unsavory and mysterious companion. Mysterious because of his being here, and his condition. It was incongruous to see the mythical Graham, doer of big things for the oil king of the midcontinent field, fraternizing with Malley as it would have been to see John D. Rockefeller roughnecking on one of his own wells.

There was an item that made my gorge rise slowly, and which knocked out of me any sympathetic ideas I may have had. Things having turned out as they had, we didn't owe Malley a cent, ethically speaking. We'd paid him four hundred, net, for making an easy forced landing.

But I might have fallen for a few dollars to him if it had not been for the fact that both of 'em were so plainly trying to get away with something in the blackmail line, and they were very unprepossessing in their manner of demanding it. Right away I froze up on 'em, and the whole business gave me a faint sensation of nausea. So I broke into fairly forthright speech.

"As a matter of fact, my net profit so far on my little bit of a slice of acreage is only fifteen thousand dollars. But if it was fifteen million I'm not falling for blackmailing from a couple of weasels like you two.

"I don't know where you come in on this, Graham, or why, but I'm telling you both this: You can sue and do your ——est, both of you. You can drag me into court and make me hire a lawyer and all the rest of it, but I'll spend all I've got to save myself from paying a nickel to a pair of dirty blackmailers. And when the case finally gets up to the judge he'll probably consider the fact that both of you were working for a man that'd used illegal methods against us—and if necessary that same man'll probably testify to that same effect. So go ahead and be —— to you!"

Whereupon I left 'em flat, and went over to the ship to unwire my suitcase, which was parked on one wing, close to the fuselage. I heard no words, acrimonious or otherwise, emanating from my two antagonists.

AS I was working on the wires I heard the sound of an automobile motor, and looked around to discover Malcolm Cary and his new fiancée in his new car. I expected that. Malley and Graham retired into the background and watched, like a couple of buzzards, while Malcolm brought his shiny blue eight-cylinder wagon to a stop right alongside the D.H.

I dragged the suitcase over while answering various and sundry greetings from both of them. Cary was one of those huge, gentle, drawling Texans who act and talk like lambs, and turn into human tornadoes at the slightest provocation, or none whatever.

He weighed over two hundred, and looked a bit fat until one discovered that his flesh was hard as a rock. His full-moon face ordinarily beamed comfortably at the whole wide world. When he got mad one huge paw would stroke his thin brown hair slowly, and his gray eyes would grow smaller as the flesh gathered around them. His whole face would sort of tighten at times like that.

As for his bride-to-be—she was a breathtaking damsel whom we had both met soon after our arrival in Hastings, owing to the fact that we bunked at her mother's house. She was as small as Malcolm was large. They looked like the mountain and the mouse together. He could have worn her set in a signet ring. She was bobbed-haired and big-eyed, and possessed that rare quality in women—frank, straightforward, unaffected sincerity. She never acted coy, or anything else which she wasn't. When she was pleased she showed it, and when she liked a man she didn't try to hide it. I will be frank and state here and now that when I began to know her at first she caused my heart to do several skips, some cavortings and a flutter or two.

"To what do we owe the honor of this visit, Slim?" drawled Malcolm as he lighted a homemade cigaret before starting.

"Don't kid me," I admonished him. "What's up?"

"Why, nothing particular," he said in some surprize. "You knew that the third corner well had come in for only five hundred barrels, and the fourth one and the one in the middle ain't down tuh the sand yet——"

"Sure. But then why the wire?"

"What wire?" he queried, turning in the front seat to gaze into my open optics.

"The wire you sent me! Saying to come right over—important, and all that stuff——"

"Slim, I didn't send yuh any wire whatever! Sugar, have I been in my right mind?"

Mary—her name was Mary Baker—slid her hand over on his big paw, smiled, and then looked at me with a slight shadow in her eyes. Evidently she sensed a new complication—and well she knew what some complications in the oil fields meant.

I took a few seconds to digest his statement, and then I told him, word for word, what the wire had said. I couldn't be mistaken, of course. It had been sent from Hastings, and it was signed Malcolm Cary. Then, without pause, I narrated my interview with Malley and Graham.

"Do you suppose they sent that wire, just to get me here?" I asked oratorically as we crawled over the rutty road toward town. "I can't believe it. With you and Upton on the ground they wouldn't have wired me, but would have started off on you. By the way, where does Graham fit in?"

"Burney fired 'im," Malcolm said succinctly. Looking at him from a southwest angle, I could see that fleshy face of his tightening. He scented trouble.

"After Burney took me and Upton on, Graham got kind o' sore, pulled a couple o' bones, then got drunk one night an' he an' the old man went tuh the mat and Graham got fired. Since then he's been conductin' a contest all his own tuh see whether he can drink up booze faster'n the stills can make it, and he's been gainin', I hear."

We rode silently a while, both trying to figure things out. It seemed a funny situation. Seemed as though Malley or Graham must have sent that wire—and yet, for what possible reason? They could have started on the other two men, and a wire signed with Cary's name seemed a crazy subterfuge.

Mary said nothing, but seemed to sort of curl up in the front seat, close to Malcolm as though she was comforted by his presence. She'd been in on the somewhat lurid events indigenous to the procurement of the Howard acreage, and I guess she was somewhat worried about her brand-new and unused fiancé.

Finally Malcolm broke the silence, and his words, as usual under conditions of that sort, were unusually gentle and spaced at even wider intervals than usual. From one word to another was a toll call.

"SOMETHIN'S up somewhere, and I ain't shore Burney ain't at the bottom of it," he said.

"There's some —— good reason on somebody's part for callin' yuh heuh, but what it can be I don't know, with me and Upton on the ground and you holdin' only a small share. But Burney's been actin' real worried and peculiar like, Slim.

"I ain't sorry yo're here. You seem tuh be one o' those birds that thrive on trouble, so far's I can see, and now that yo're here I aim tuh have a showdown an' see what them hints the old man's been throwin' out mean. We'll likewise interview the telegraph operators an' see who sent that there *billet doux* and in general try tuh see where we stand. Blackmail from one side, and —— knows what from the other.

"However," he concluded, "If yuh play with snakes yo're bound tuh get bit, I reckon."

Which was what I was thinking. Through force of necessity we were hooked up, one way or another, with a crooked gang. Or a gang that had been crooked and probably would be again. It was our own funeral, but it left kind of a bad taste in my mouth.

You may say we had no business getting mixed up with 'em. Well, business is business, and what they'd done in the past or would do again was none of our business as long as our private affairs were run straight. Maybe you'd give up a bunch of jack rather than string with a man like Burney. Not me.

But then, what's the use of talking about it. That's the way things sat. I'm no deacon in the Baptist Church and no model for little Lord Fauntleroy at the best, and I don't give a —— what you think about it one way or the other.

IV

IT SEEMED to me, as we crawled down that thronged main street, that Hastings was even more crowded than it had been before, if that was possible. We'd come to Hastings when it seemed that the town was on the crest of the wave, and then our new pool, south of town, had opened up like magic.

Trading had been slowing down on the pool north of town, because the big companies had practically tied it up, and all outlying acreage had finally reached just about its top price. But our purchase of the Howard tract, with three producing wells already flowing down there, had stimulated the madness anew.

Just picture a rutted, wide main street practically solid with cars, trucks, wagons, even an ox team or two; sidewalks packed with humanity of every kind and description, but a majority leaning toward the typical oil specimen; street lined with stores, saloons, gambling and dance halls, and everybody as nervous as a man invited to make himself comfortable in the electric chair.

Flaunting signs indicated the locations of lease exchanges, and every ten feet somebody was trying to sell acreage, which they'd probably just leased, to somebody else at a higher price. Big company well-scouts and land men held court here and there, acting bored as they talked in the hundreds of thousands.

Prostitutes, rough-necks lease-hounds, hijackers, pickpockets, brokers—every type was represented. Every store had its doors wide open, and every one was packed. Temporary booths selling everything from hot dogs to lemonade had customers lined up four deep in front.

It was an overstimulated, overwrought, abnormal scene, and even a bird like me, who on the average wouldn't spend a dollar to see the Johnstown flood with the original Broadway cast, felt the resistless pull and stimulation of it. Made me restless, and before I knew it my nose was sniffing the air, longing to get on the scent of something or other. I didn't know what or where or why.

We got a lot of greetings, being men who had supposedly put over one of the biggest single deals of the Hastings pool. The fact that we still owned the Howard acreage kept us in the public eye—there'd been a thousand fortunes made and lost since I'd been in Hastings last.

We finally curved off down the side-street where Mary's comfortable, old-fashioned home sat in aged dignity, and dropped her off. Then we sort of circled the north edge of town, between the village and the first pool, on our way to Burney's house. We got about half-way when I suggested, late as usual, that it would be an excellent thing if we interviewed the people in the telegraph office first. No telling what we might unearth.

So we back-tracked, parked the car on a sidestreet, and held converse with every one of the five clerks in the office, including the manager. The girl who had taken the telegram that morning couldn't remember who sent it, except very vaguely.

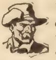
She thought he was pretty well-dressed, and wore glasses, and was fairly young. She finally thought that perhaps maybe she might be right when she seemed to remember that he wore a sailor straw hat. To be brief, we didn't find out anything that we could go on much, except that neither Malley, Graham or Burney, all of whom were known by sight to every one in the office, had been in it that morning.

So that was that. As we once more started leaping from bump to bump on the cut-up road to Burney's house I summed up my feelings in the matter.

"It must have been Malley behind it—or Burney. Chances are Malley, although why in the name of all that's good and holy he should sign your name to a telegram, or have some one else do it for him, to get me here I don't know. Incidentally, as soon as we're through with Burney I want a couple of your roughnecks to guard my ship. Malley's on the loose, I'm afraid. And furthermore, what are we going to do about this twenty-five grand?"

"Let's talk to Burney first—if we can find him," suggested Malcolm.

We were lucky in finding the gentleman. As we turned into the driveway which circled up to his ornate white mansion we spotted the old twenty-minute egg sitting on the porch. That was the spot where our first historic interview with him had taken place. This time, though, he was not accompanied by his stunning young wife.



HE GREETED us with a wave of the hand, and below his fierce white mustache his lips were curved in a smile. He was dressed, as was his almost invariable custom, in a spotless Palm Beach suit, and a huge Panama *chapeau* was doing duty as a fan. He was a big, impressive looking man, despite heavy jowls, a rather hard face, and prominent, bloodshot eyes below iron-gray hair.

Ever since Malcolm, Upton and I, in combination, had beaten him on that deal he'd apparently had a vast admiration for the ability of my two *confrères*. As I mentioned somewhere else in this poem, the company he organized to exploit the Howard acreage had Malcolm as general manager and Upton—"the best oil man in the midcontinent field when he was sober—" as field chief in charge of all drilling.

"Come up," the old fellow invited us. "Hello, Lieutenant. Thought I seen your ship this mornin'. How's tricks, Malcolm, my boy?"

"Not what they might be," returned the Texan gently.

"So? What's the matter? I was out to the field this mornin' and Dewey said Burney Number 6 was lookin' fine. Jackson, of the Texas, offered me eight hundred and fifty thousand dollars for the works, just as they sit, but I told him we'd prove every inch o' that territory and make 'im pay through the nose.

" 'We're willin',' says he, 'but don't wait too long. Oil runs out, yuh know.' "

"We'd better sell when that Number 6 comes in—if she does," stated Malcolm. No. 5, of course, too, but that ought tuh be in a couple o' days now. We can't do no more than tuh prove there's oil on all four corners and in the middle, can we?"

"No. And a cool million'll just about be the melon we cut. So what's bitin' yuh?"

"Just this," stated Malcolm, and in a few well-chosen words he told the old millionaire about the telegram, and likewise about the little social chat between Graham, Malley and I.

"Now listen, Mr. Burney, and don't git insulted too quick," Cary went on, his eyes boring into our host's. "Yuh've been throwin' out a few remarks the last few days which didn't sit so well with me. We all know yore methods in the past, but we figured you wouldn't work none of yore crooked stuff on us because we got somethin' on yuh. What do you know about this here telegram, what do yuh know about where Graham is sittin' on this particular deal—and just where in —— are you situated yoreself?"

Burney pulled his moustache ruminatively. Then he spoke in that rasping voice of his.

"I don't blame yuh none," he stated. "Fact o' the matter's this. Graham hadn't been so good for a couple o' months before he tied up with you boys and got licked. When I put you and Upton in on the new company he got soreheaded. Finally got drunk and tried to argue with me, and I fired 'im.

"Then he made some threats. Gonna hold me up because he'd pulled off a few deals fur me, and thought he was on the inside. Had me worried right bad, fur a while. Didn't know which way tuh turn. Then I got somethin' so definite on him that I've shut his trap forever. That's where he sat, and that's where he's sittin' now—a busted flush against three full houses."

"How do you account for trying to blackmail us out of twenty-five thousand on account o' that shootin'?" demanded Malcolm.

"That's Malley," I interposed. "Graham's just working through him. Malley slipped in letting me know Graham was in on it. Nobody's got any way of controlling Malley, have they?"

"Except through Graham," said Burney.

"And what you do to Graham wouldn't stop Malley," I pointed out. "Malley could work alone—and we've got nothing on him, have we?"

"He was just hired to make that trip," Burney agreed.

"What about planting that heroin?" enquired Malcolm. "When Blake planted it in our ship, under yore orders, Malley was supposed to be watchin' the ship ——"

"But Blake distinctly said that *he* planted it, and according to him Malley wasn't in on it," I reminded him.

"No reason why we couldn't git Blake tuh say that Malley *did* know about it," suggested the old reprobate.

"No, but I'll be —— if I'd do that," I said flatly. "I'm ready to be sick being mixed up with a lot of double-crossing, blackmailing, framing crooks anyway! Maybe we'd be justified, but I'll be —— if I'll get low enough to ——"

"Me neither," drawled Malcolm.

Right there I fixed my rolling eyes on Burney. I am a forthright and crude appleknocker from the wilds of Utah, unversed in subtlety or kindred smooth and suave and slippery devices, and in my present condition of deep disgust I came to bat heavily.

"All this doesn't clear up the mystery of that fake telegram," I said, talking to Burney. "Maybe Malley was the cause of it, but why? If he wanted to get into communication with me he didn't need to use Malcolm's name, and if he did send it for purposes of getting me near-by to blackmail, he'd have had no scruples about telling me this morning that he had done it. Burney, are you responsible for that wire calling me here? And if so, why?"

"No!" roared Burney.

"Now listen," I went on, waving a long and horny and oil-stained forefinger to add emphasis. "Burney, I know your record and I know what you tried to do to us. We're all in a mess together right now, but that doesn't alter the fact that I don't trust you as far as I could blow the Rock of Gibraltar by taking a deep breath. The only thing that keeps me from being absolutely certain that you *are* behind it is that I can't figure any reason on earth why anybody on earth should want me in Hastings for crooked or straight purposes. I'm inclined to think you're up to something, and if you are——"

"What the —— d'yuh mean!" bellowed Burney, his fleshy face purple and his bloodshot eyes wild as the sea on a stormy night. "By —— ——"

He got hold of himself then, and it surely was an effort. He looked from Malcolm's set face to mine, and piped down.

"I can't blame yuh, Lieutenant, but it ain't so!" he said with a certain amount of dignity. "I've fought my way from a beggar to a millionaire by bein' tougher an' harder an'—crookeder than anybody else in these stinkin' fields. But I got mine, I'm swingin' a big deal with you boys, and I'm playin' straight! I'm not bellyachin' or yappin' about reformin'—I'd do all I've done over again fur the same reasons—but in this case I'm tellin' yuh what's right! I don't know what's afoot on all these fake wires and this and that, but the Burney-Howard Development Company includes me, and yuh can count on me—hello, who's this?"

THE abrupt transition called our enthralled attention to a battered mud-covered taxi which was now fanning and fogging up the driveway to the accompaniment of divers groans, rattles and wheezes. There was one man in the back seat, and he alighted in front of the porch steps, told the driver to wait, and then turned toward us.

"Sorry to bother you, gentlemen, but I have important business with Mr. Burney," he said easily. "I presume, sir, that you are Mr. Adam Burney, President of the Burney-Howard Development Company?"

"Uh huh," grunted the old man. "And this here's Cary, my general manager fur that company, and Lieutenant Evans, a stockholder."

"I'm fortunate to have found you all here," said our visitor. He came up the steps, carrying what looked like a map under his arm.

He was a tall, rather slender fellow who looked to be around thirty-five. His face was thin, and curiously impressive. His forehead was but little wider than his square jaw, and his whole face was in a sort of straight-line effect. His mouth was a straight, thin gash across his face, and his eyebrows and eyes were parallel to his mouth, if you get me. Just as level as could be, and at an exact right angle to a long, thin, straight nose. The corners of his mouth did not turn either down or up, nor was there the slightest curve in his eyebrows. His cheeks were lean, with high cheekbones, and his eyes were a piercing blue and his hair and eyebrows black. He was very neatly dressed in a tweed suit and Panama hat. He looked to be a very cool, competent, incisive individual.

He did not sit down, but leaned against the porch railing, facing us. He took out a silver cigaret case, offered us smokes, and lit one himself. Then he said:

"Gentlemen, I'm an oil man. I've been down in the Tampico Field for two years, and have made some money. I'm on my way east on other business now, and stopped off here a few days ago to see what I could see. My name is Craig—Robert C. Craig."

He looked at us as though he expected that we'd recognize his name. I wouldn't, naturally, but Burney might, being an oil man. But all that Burney said was—

"What can we do fur yuh, Mr. Craig?"

"Make a deal with me," said that gentleman in his level, deep voice. "I looked around here, got the lay of the land, and then got busy. I heard about what you were doing, and decided I'd like to horn in with you to our mutual advantage. Laying aside false humility, I'm as good an oil man—in the sense of knowing acreage and its value and putting it across—as you'll be likely to find. I'm not blowing, I'm stating a fact."

He unrolled his map.

"Here's a blueprint of the acreage south of the river," he said, spreading a map which looked something like this:

"Now all these tracts on the eastern and southern fringe of your acreage are in small blocks, as you know. The whole thing totals some hundred and sixty acres. Originally they were owned by a large number of different people and of course, ever since your Blake Number 1 came in trading has been almost hysterical in them. Most of them have been re-leased five and six times."

"That's right!" nodded Burney, and Malcolm agreed by saying nothing. I could see the huge Texan was watching our curt, businesslike visitor with a great deal of interest.

"Now due to the fact that this land is broken up so much—so many different owners—the big company men haven't gone to the trouble of trying to buy any of it to date. Waiting to get your acreage, I presume. The Texas has already stepped in on the western edge and got around seven hundred acres, as you know. After they get your stuff, then they can try to get all these small owners to sell to 'em, but naturally they won't bother with ten acres here and twenty there. They want the whole shebang or nothing."

"Shore. Well, what about it?"

Burney was sunk low in his chair, pulling his moustache, and devoting his exclusive attention to Craig. The old man was all business, now, and was watching and listening as though his life depended on what was coming.

"Well, now we're right down to bedrock," stated Craig. "I've inquired around and used my eyes. I know your system in the past, Mr. Burney, and what you're doing now. You're proving your acreage to get a larger proportionate price for it than as though you sold without drilling. In brief, I decided that I could make money for myself, and for you, if I could swing a big deal. So I gambled. Mr. Burney, I now own this hundred and sixty acres offset from your acreage, on the eastern and southern fringe. I got all the owners to sell to me, and I spent a lot of money. Now I want to make a deal with you, or your company rather, to take over this hundred and sixty acres, add it to your holdings, and handle it as you are handling the Howard acreage."

"You say yuh got that hundred and sixty acres solid?" demanded Burney.

"Lock, stock and barrel," stated Craig. "I can prove that titles are clear, etc. My lawyer and I will naturally demonstrate that to your satisfaction."

"If yuh gathered that there acreage, and didn't pay too much, yo're an oil man all right," stated Burney. "And a gambler."

"Maybe," admitted Craig. "Now here's my proposition.

"I like your method of handling acreage. I believe that you, Mr. Burney, by adding this hundred and sixty acres to your holdings, can get a bigger price for it when you finally close out to the big companies than I could, individually. So I want to throw in with you. As an oil man, I believe there's a pool that'll knock your eye out right there south of the river. Your four flowing wells are averaging around fifteen hundred barrels a day—and there'll be bigger ones.

"Don't forget that your biggest well, Blake Number 1 here—is closest to my hundred and sixty acres, too. I paid plenty for my acreage, but I make this proposition—being, as you said, a gambler. I'll sell you this hundred and sixty, to be added to your acreage and handled just as you handle your original five hundred, for fifty thousand dollars cash, to bind the bargain. You agree to drill one well in the middle of this acreage, to prove it as you are proving the Howard tract. When you sell the whole tract—mine, and the Howard acreage—it'll be at a certain price per acre. Out of what my hundred and sixty sells for on a *pro rata* basis you deduct the fifty thousand plus the expense of drilling the well; the net expense, after deducting from the cost of the well the value of the oil which has flowed from it before you sell. This will clear you of your investment. Of the net profit—from the oil which has flowed and the selling price—you get twenty-five per cent. and I get seventy-five. Naturally you can't lose—the hundred and sixty can't sell for less than you'll have spent. I simply have come to the conclusion that seventy-five per cent. of what *you* make out of it will total more than a hundred per cent. of what I make out of it, particularly in view of the fact that I've got to be in the east for the next couple of months and can't stay here to look after things myself."

Burney didn't hesitate an instant. He turned to Malcolm.

"A good proposition," he stated.

"Almost too good," drawled Malcolm.

Burney turned to Craig.

"It's a deal—if yuh can live up to yore part of it."

"Good," said Craig smilingly, gathering up his map. "The quicker it goes through the better. My lawyer is here—going east with me—and has handled the papers for all the buys I've made. If I can, I'd like to leave here tonight. Suppose we say that you and your lawyer meet my lawyer and myself at the Imperial Hotel at two-thirty o'clock this afternoon, in Room 31. I'll have all the papers ready—my leases to the land, and the contract between yourselves and me. Your lawyer can look them over, and we can sign on the dotted lines without delay. A certified check for fifty thousand will be all right.

"Thank you, gentlemen. I trust that the deal will be mutually profitable. I, personally, am delighted. Is two-thirty convenient? I would like to get the four o'clock train if I could."

"All right," nodded Burney. "But yo're workin' pretty fast. Better be shore yore papers are in good shape if yuh want tuh run it through that quick."

"My lawyer's a hound," smiled Craig. "Being from Tampico, he knows the oil business. Don't think I bought an acre that had any cloud on it, from the original title right on through every previous lease. Good day, gentlemen."

As the taxi rattled on down the driveway Malcolm grinned.

"Pretty snappy *hombre*, and he's handin' us somethin'," he opined.

"Well, be that as it may, I'm still thinking of why I'm here, and what Malley's going to do," I stated. "He could make it right unhandy for me."

"Bein' as we're bloated with money and all, and tuh save trouble, maybe we'd better grease 'im some," said Burney. "That there shootin' proposition——"

"I'm going to see him again, right now, and see what I can do," I decided. "I won't pay blackmail. It keeps on forever, and even if it doesn't, I won't stand for it. Malley was well paid for his trouble, and by —— that dirty bum isn't going to hold me up—not if I was worth a million dollars. I'll let him shoot his wad, I guess. Malcolm, where'll I meet you when I get through?"

"Suppose you drift up to the Imperial at two-thirty," said Cary. "Three cooks are better'n two."

"And too many heads spoil the broth," I quoted, or misquoted, or at any rate, said. "I'll see this bozo alone, and see what I can shake out of him. You can carry me as far as town, Malcolm, and then I'll taxi on out. I'd give several new-mown whiskers to know what the —— is up around this town —and what Malley knows I'll prod out of him if I have to hypnotize him with a brick."

V

IT SO happened that I didn't have to go on out to the field. As Malcolm and I were tooling our way down the street in his car we were close to the row of parked cars along one side, and just by chance my eagle eye spotted the greasy features of Mr. Malley in front of the Imperial Hotel. This imposing hostelry was a frame building, set back a few feet from the street, and had porches on both stories running the full length of the front. What had been a small lawn in front of it was now concealed by booths facing the street, and behind them chairs filled the whole space. Many million dollars had swapped owners in those chairs, for here the big company men were wont to receive those who had land to sell. You had to stand in line to get a seat.

"See you at two-thirty," I yelped to Cary and dove out of the car.

As I squeezed through between two parked cars Malley spotted me over the heads of the passing populace. It's no harder to pick me out of the crowd than it would be to notice the Statue of Liberty in a toy store.

"I've been looking around for you," Malley told me directly. "I didn't have a chance t' tell yuh that I'm shakin' this burg at four o'clock this afternoon fur San Antonio, and when I get there the fun'll start if y' don't come across."

"Come here," I said, and dragged him into an alley a few feet from the sidewalk.

"Why didn't Cary stop?" he inquired. "He's in on it, ain't he? He shot my prop off from your ship——"

"I'll talk for the three," I announced. "Now you listen a minute. Why did you have a fake telegram sent to me, signed by Cary?"

"Huh?"

He seemed utterly astounded. I'd tried to take him off-guard, but the result, coupled with the fact that the telegraph company's clerk was positive that he had not been in the office and that there was no sense in the idea anyway made me put Malley entirely out of my calculations as far as that wire went.

"Listen, Lieutenant," he said to me, very earnestly, "I'll swear I didn't know anything about any telegram. And I had no hand sendin' anything. Honest t' ——, I was comin' down t' McMullen—gonna fly down—and brace yuh down there right on your home grounds where I could make good on my complaint against yuh within ten minutes. With your C. O., I mean. I figured you'd be easier t' handle than Cary or Upton—and I wouldn't be safe in this town any way tryin' to pull off the deal. Burney'd frame me quick. When you come I pitched in——"

"You're being pretty frank," I told him.

I couldn't get his drift, quite. He seemed to be absolutely frank and straightforward —and yet there was something curiously sneaking about him—like a licked dog trying to make friends or something of the sort.

"I'll come clean," he told me, and now

his eyes met mine firmly. "I'm entitled to the dough, Evans. I'm nothin'—I know it. I never have been anything. I come to this town t' try and make money, and I ain't made a cent."

"Because your —— plane and you yourself generate about as much confidence as I'd have in the word of Judas Iscariot! Sloppy, dirty——"

"I know. But I've flivvered a dozen times tryin' t' make somethin' down here. Then my big chance come along. I was gonna get big money for makin' that night trip, and a slice o' the profits if they come along. Then you spoiled it all. And I got nothin' but a measly five hundred, and had to buy a prop out o' that. You fellows 've got millions, or will have—yuh put my life in danger, I'm down and out and—honest t' ——, Evans, yuh owe it to me!"

This little speech sort of reached me, —— sucker that I am for everything from a hard-luck story to the tears of a gold-digging female. If a woman cries I may know she's just doing a Sarah Bernhardt, but I'll give her the town hall any time. As for a hard-luck story—if I told you the amount of money I've shelled out it would sound as though I was talking in rubles.

"Malley, you're talking through your hat," I told him. "You weren't in for any big money if the trip went through at all. Maybe liberal payment, yes. And the reason you're down on your luck is because you're so —— shiftless that you'd leave a ten-dollar bill on the sidewalk to save yourself the trouble of picking it up. Thirdly, my dear brother, you're mixed up in this deal with Graham, who's already tried to hold up old man Burney."

At the same time that I was orating thusly, I was doing my best to think. And I had about come to the decision that a few dollars might save a lot of trouble. The oilfields abound with the smartest shyster lawyers who ever drew a crooked lease. A suit against the company on that little matter of shooting off the prop of his airplane would be embarrassing, and might get the plaintiff a sizable chunk of money.

I tried to get myself to look at it as a settlement out of court, rather than blackmail. And I'd just about cranked up my tongue to mention about two thousand bucks in full settlement, with a signed statement that it was in full payment of all damages, when Malley went wrong. He threw off his pose, and his eyes were gleaming with utter ferocity—so suddenly that it was a shock.

"You're a moral lecturer too, are yuh?" he snarled. "Well listen here, you —— big-mouthed hypocrite, I'll get you and I'll get you good, you——"

The rest of his remarks would burn up this paper and wreathe your head in heavy blue smoke. I stood for about three pretty descriptive words, and then I raised my fist from somewhere alongside my knee and dispatched it to the pointed chin of ex-corporal Malley. It lifted him right off his feet, and deposited him like a sack of meal against the building a couple of feet behind him.

He didn't come back at me. He was dazed, and he leaned against the wall and said nothing while he was collecting his wits.

"That'll be that," I told him. "If you'd kept your mouth shut you might have got something. Now sue and be —— to you!"

His eyes were curiously ratlike as he looked at me, and when he spoke it was with slow venom.

"You think you're top o' the deck now, but in just about an hour you'll be squealin' like a stuck pig!" he told me as I was starting to go.

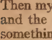
"You must think the law moves so fast it would make radio seem like an ox-team," I told him. "Maybe, when you're tripping over your tangled gray whiskers, you may have a decision on that suit."

He said nothing, being scared of another bat on the jaw, I presume, but he smiled a nasty smile. The boy actually appeared to have an ace up his sleeve, and to be gloating over me. Which was cause for thought as I ambled out of the alley and on the mobbed sidewalk.

IT WAS only a quarter after two, so I took a turn down the street and looked into a few joints just for fun. Watched a couple of big poker games, turned down a pressing invitation to tea from a strange woman, talked here and there with oil men I'd happened to meet, and in general passed a few minutes surveying the feverish, never-monotonous life of an oil town in full boom.

When I happened to cock a snook at my alarm clock I found that I'd used up my fifteen minutes. I cantered back the two blocks to the Imperial hotel, and as I thought of Mr. Robert C. Craig I was conscious of a definite interest in the man. Then my thoughts leaped lightly to Malley, and the mysterious threat in his manner—something not to be laid, in my mind, to the coming lawsuit. It must have been the corporal who had sent that telegram to me, for some mysterious reason of his own, I decided. Apparently he expected something to happen to me shortly.

VI



AS I hove alongside the palatial hostelry I saw Burney's glittering, high-powered car standing in the street, a man at the wheel who occasionally acted as chauffeur for Burney, in the intervals of his duties as handy man around the house. As I entered the crowded office of the hotel—you couldn't call it a lobby—I spotted none other than Mr. Robert C. Craig making his way through the crowd toward the door, accompanied by an old acquaintance, Mr. Graham. Mr. Graham was now shaved and decently clothed.

It was twenty minutes of three. That was very peculiar, Craig on his way out, and Graham undoubtedly with him. There had been no time to transact the deal, they couldn't have consummated it that quick.

I was in a bit of a whirl. Instinctively I smelled something cheesy, so to speak. Looking for something I couldn't accurately describe, I went up the stairs two at a time, bound for Room 31.

Then, without any more warning than an electric light gives before it goes out, it seemed as though several pieces of a jigsaw puzzle automatically fell into place in my mind. I connected, vaguely, that fake telegram, Mr. Robert C. Craig, Mr. Malley and his attitude a few moments before when I socked him so hard he gave a little rein to his feelings, and Mr. Graham.

If I'd had two seconds to think it out, I'd have had the details set, but I was so sure of something that when I found Room 31 locked I backed up and hit it like an express train would an eggcrate. It crashed in—and I saw old man Burney and Malcolm Cary, bound and gagged on the floor. Burney was unconscious, but Malcolm rolled a pair of demon's eyes at me below a lump the size of a lemon on his forehead.

In less time than a streak of light takes to cross a room I had Malcolm loose with the aid of my trusty pen knife.

"Slugged you both and got the check, eh?" I asked him, and he nodded as I worked.

"I hope to —— they take the time to cash the check!" I told him. "You give the alarm and I'll get out to the field. They must be planning to fly out of town——"

Without saying another word I dashed out of the room. I knew Malcolm would give the alarm, but suddenly I was sure of one thing. They were planning to use my ship! That had been the reason for the fake telegram.

That superannuated Jenny wouldn't get to the Mexican border without regassing, and it was too much of a wreck to trust on a long trip any way. Malley was going to steal my De Haviland and fly Craig and Graham over the border—and probably pick up a few dollars for the ship from somebody down there. That's why they'd wired me to come. The whole oil deal had been a fake cooked up by Mr. Robert C. Craig, evidently a smart crook who had simply used what tools came his way.

I went through the crowd in front of the hotel like a tank through a pain of glass, and flung myself into the front seat of Burney's car. The chauffeur knew me.

"Give me that wheel—your boss has been robbed of fifty thousand bucks!" I told him, and within the next few seconds we were crawling the half block to the nearest side-street.

Once I made the turn I gave that big beauty the gun, and we just skimmed across the ruts and holes in the road. It was the longest way to the field, but likewise the fastest. I told Horan, the chauffeur, what had happened as I sent that car along like a bat out of ——. I didn't know just what I was going to do, except try to keep either one of those ships from leaving the ground.

If the crooks had stopped to cash the checks I might beat them out there, but it was supposed to have been certified, and it was my understanding that a certified check can't be stopped under any circumstances. I was as sure as though I'd heard them talking that they were planning to fly my ship out of Hastings to the border.

And you can imagine how smart I felt when I remembered that I'd nearly fallen for that extra dough to Malley!

We made the three miles from the Imperial Hotel to the flying field in four seconds less than nothing, flat. As I tooled the big car into the pasture lot I saw that I had beaten Craig and Graham—but my ship was down at the lower end of the field, headed into the wind, the motor idling, and beside it stood Malley, with two guns on him. One was in his hand, and he shot at us as I stopped the car. He was three hundred yards away, but the shot was a warning.

I stopped the car close to Malley's decrepit Jenny, which was standing on the line in front of the stained, rickety canvas hangar. For a moment I was absolutely stumped. At any second Craig and Graham would arrive—and there was no way I could put the De Haviland out of commission. I had no gun.

I glanced back toward town, and over the flat fields I saw a car speeding toward us. It was a quarter of a mile away. At that same instant a wild plan sort of sparked into being in my hot brain.

In about ten words I'd pointed out his duty to Horan, and promised him half the earth from Burney if he'd do it. Malley was still standing beside the De Haviland, waiting. If the ships had only been reversed, I remember thinking. The Jenny wouldn't do over ninety at the best, and the D. H. could step it off at a hundred and fifty.

I didn't know whether there was any gas in the Jenny, or whether it was in flying condition or not, but I had to take a chance. Horan and I jumped out of the car, and the chauffeur went to the propellor and spun it wildly while I worked the primer in the cockpit. Then I turned on the ignition switch, and ran around to the prop.

MALLEY was coming toward us at a dead run, shooting wildly. He was too far away to hit anything, of course, as yet. The other car was coming like the wind and behind it, a mere speck, was still another. That was Malcolm in full pursuit, I was sure.

I passed the prop on a gallop, grabbing it with one hand and giving it a mighty jerk. And the motor, fairly warm because of the blazing sun, caught!

I had opened the throttle too far, to make sure the motor would continue to run if she did start, and the ship got in motion right away.

"Get in the car and keep yourself out of bullet range!" I yelled to Horan, and then dragged myself into the cockpit of the moving Jenny, and shoved the throttle on all the way.

In all my flying career I have never gone through more tense seconds than I did while that Jenny was speeding over the ground. A thousand things might be the matter with it, although as I looked over the wings and flipped the controls just a trifle it seemed to be working all right.

As I sped past Malley he shot at me, but I was going too fast for him to hit me. Then the Jenny took the air.

It was so right-wing-heavy that it was a truckdriver's job to keep the stick way over to the left to hold the crate level, and the motor only turned up thirteen fifty and would barely hold the ship in the air. It flew like a barn with wings on it.

Five hundred yards back of the fence at the lower edge of the field I was only fifty feet high. I nosed down until the boat was level, and banked around in almost a complete circle. When I was straightened out I was headed across the field, and the first car was entering the limits of said pasture. Malley was standing in the middle of the field, and Horan was driving the Burney car out of the danger zone. He had passed the fugitive car, evidently.

I knew I'd won, so far as keeping those thugs in town was concerned. I nosed down, and as I got within a few yards of the De Haviland I was skimming the ground. The car, with Graham and Craig in it, was scuttling down the field, and Malley was running toward the D. H.

I was headed right for the tail of the De Haviland, and at right angles to the fuselage. Having dived with the little ninety-horse-power motor wide open, that Jenny was going like a streak of light and the engine was fairly shaking itself to pieces. The terrific air stream, compounded of the speed and the propellor wash, nearly tore my head from my shoulders as I flew with said knot on the end of my backbone stuck over the side.

I was aiming for the big rudder at the very end of the D. H. And I hit it. There was scarcely a jar as my left wing tip tore through the frail linen and wood, and the next second I used my excess speed to zoom up a trifle. I looked back, and down, and permitted myself a seraphic grin. The rudder was a mass of wreckage—and that D. H.

wouldn't fly until a new one was procured.

The three crooks were standing beside the ship, now. Perhaps they were discussing the weather. They seemed to be excited.

I circled around for a landing as the second car, which was so full of men that spare legs and arms stuck out here and there, snorted into the field and tore down on the three buccaneers. Those gentlemen just stuck their hands in the air as the half-dozen men piled out, several of them holding guns.

It wasn't such a bad deal—swapping a hundred dollar rudder for fifty thousand bucks. I didn't think until after it was over that I wasn't interested in a cent of the fifty thousand—my little fifty acre share would neither expand nor shrink.

All of which, right from my near-fall for Malley's sob story down to risking my fool neck to stop that aerial getaway, goes to show that the dumber they are the harder they fall, and that while no one can fool a horse-fly anybody can fool a jackass-flyer.

VII

THAT'S about all of it. We got the fifty thousand back. Graham, Malley and Craig—who proved to be a very well-known, highly esteemed and successful crook—are making pebbles out of boulders for the welfare of the great commonwealth of Texas, and I'm lounging around McMullen.

The Burney-Howard Development Company sold out their holdings to one of the Standard group about a month after the little *soireé* I've described, for an even million. The last well Burney brought in flowed five thousand barrels. My net profit on that five thousand investment Cary made for me was close to sixty thousand dollars.

I've done a fairly good job getting rid of it. Give me time, and it'll be gone. If I have a cent more than a hundred dollars to my name when it comes my turn to collide with the earth at a high rate of speed I'll be sore as ——.

The Camp-Fire

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

YOU'LL remember that there was still some more to hear in our discussion of Julius Cæsar, started by Talbot Mundy's having come forward with an estimate of Cæsar very much at variance with the usually accepted one.

HERE is a letter from Arthur G. Brodeur, of the University of California, whom, as a member of our writers' brigade, you already know as one who is worth listening to on European history:

Berkeley, California.

I'd make the general criticism of Mr. Mundy's case that he takes a lot for granted for which there is no evidence; that he generalizes frightfully, and that he has selected as the basis of his argument all the statements ever made by Cæsar's enemies and rejected all the testimony of his friends. He has even rejected some of the evidence offered by Cæsar's enemies, when that evidence was favorable to Cæsar. And in several places where he alludes to Cæsar's Commentaries, it looks to me as if he's misunderstood the Latin. Either he has or I have, that much is certain. I'll take up his points one by one:

HE SAYS: "Cæsar by his own showing was a liar, a brute, a treacherous humbug and a conceited ass, as well as the ablest military expert in the world at that time." "By his own showing" must mean that this is all revealed in the Commentaries. I can't see it. The Roman Senate, which wanted his scalp at the time, accused him of treachery toward the Germans; but the fact seems to be that Cæsar merely took advantage of a fair opportunity to hit a self-confessed enemy (Ariovistus), who far outnumbered him, at a strategic disadvantage. Ariovistus expected a fight, had come looking for it, ignored Cæsar's warnings, and then exposed himself. Being a good general, Cæsar thrashed him, as the French Army of Paris thrashed the Germans when they lost their heads in the first Battle of the Marne. I can't find any place where Cæsar reveals himself as a liar or a humbug. Conceited he undoubtedly was—but an ass! His enemies never thought so. Nor was he any more of a brute than any other leader of his time—not so much as most. I'll give the proof of that later. In response to this general denunciation I will merely cite the significant fact that Cicero, one of Cæsar's staunchest political opponents, confessed that whenever he shrank from Cæsar's ambition, he had to yield to his great admiration for Cæsar's character. (See his letters, nos. 7 and following.)

MR. MUNDY doesn't believe Cæsar wrote his own Commentaries—thinks his secretary did, and that a slave transcribed after Cæsar had edited the copy. What's his evidence for this? Merely that he doesn't like Cæsar, and that the first person creeps in here and there into a narrative mostly in the third person. Let me ask Mr. Mundy whether, if he undertook to write up the account of eight or nine years of his own busy life, all in the third person, he wouldn't find it hard to avoid the first personal pronoun once in a while. All that such lapses mean is a slip of the pen. It's true that his legate Aulus Hirtius wrote the 8th book of the Commentaries, but Cæsar never tried to hide the fact. And it's most significant, that Cicero, the prettiest stylist and judge of prose style in Roman times, who had heard Cæsar speak and seen his writings often, regarded the Commentaries as unquestionably written by Cæsar himself, and praises them as a model of historical writing. Not only that, but he judged them accurate. The men among Cæsar's contemporaries who attacked his truthfulness were all his enemies, notably his bitter opponents Dolabella, Actorius Naso, and the elder Curio. And if there is danger—as there is—in accepting a man's own account of his deeds, it's just as dangerous and absurd to reject his account altogether when that account is about all there is to go by.

MR. MUNDY accuses Cæsar of every form of vice except drunkenness. He seems to get his evidence for these statements in his letter, as well as for the account of the songs sung by Cæsar's soldiers about his debauchery, from Suetonius. It is certainly not to be found in Plutarch, except for the account of his liason with Cleopatra, which seems to be established beyond question. Now Suetonius lived about a hundred and thirty years after Cæsar; he drew his materials partly from actual court archives, and partly from sheer gossip. Of the latter there was plenty about Cæsar, as there is about any great man who has bitter enemies. Moreover, Suetonius manages to accuse every one of whom he writes of loose living. And finally, how much reliance is to be placed in his estimate of Cæsar's virtue may be gleaned from the following fact: in Sections 50 and following he accuses Cæsar of every kind of wantonness, but in Section 49 he says in so many words: "There was no stain on his reputation for chastity except his intimacy with King Nicomedes." And that one exception, rotten enough if true, may be dismissed as sheer drivel; for the one thing certainly known about Cæsar's character was that he possessed too high an opinion of himself for that particular form of baseness. But notice how—with that exception—Suetonius (Mr. Mundy's source) denies his own statements. Personally I don't believe that Cæsar was much better or much worse, in sexual morality, than his fellow nobles; but we must remember that the Puritan tradition did not exist until the 16th century. It's silly to judge the morals of a single man of classic times by our professed standards of today. From our standpoint, ancient Rome was rotten morally; but it was no worse than Greece, Assyria, or any other ancient civilization except the one relatively pure civilization of the Hebrews. We vaunt ourselves on our own morality—but look up our own venereal statistics and then judge if we're any better than the Romans.

"HE HABITUALLY used the plunder of conquered cities for the purpose of bribing the Roman Senate." I object to the word "habitually"; it's true that he took the plunder of conquered cities for himself; but it's also true that he distributed it, not to the senators, whom he knew he couldn't win over, but to his soldiers and to the people of Rome—partly in wheat, partly in the form of lavish amusements, partly in the reconstruction of those same cities he had destroyed, filling them with Roman citizens. "He cut off the hands of fifty thousand Gauls on one occasion, as a mere act of retaliation." Well, he cut them off all right, but not as an act of retaliation. He knew that if he spared those fighting men who had so recently imperiled Rome's power, he would soon have them in arms against him once more. Cruel? Absolutely. But not one of Cæsar's worst enemies ever accused him of cruelty for cruelty's sake. More of that anon. Let me cite, over against his cruelty, the following evidence of his mercy, which was exceptional, not only for a Roman, but for any man of ancient times: "After he had ended his civil wars, he did so honorably behave himself, that there was no fault to be found in him; and therefore methinks, amongst other honors they gave him, he rightfully deserved this, that they should build him a temple of clemency, to thank him for his courtesy he had used unto them in his victory. For he pardoned many of them that had borne arms against him, and, furthermore, did prefer some of them to honor and office in the commonwealth: as, amongst others, Cassius and Brutus, both the which were made prætors." (Plutarch: North's translation. N. B.—Plutarch lived long after Cæsar's death, and had no axe to grind; and he didn't get his material from Cæsar's own writings either.)

As for his breaking his word often and treacherously, I can't find any support for the statement. Where is the evidence? Cicero, his adversary, praises his honorable character. Sure, he was vain—vain as a peacock. So have other men been, for less reason. He did have himself deified, with all the rest of it. No excuse for that, I'll admit.

"HE PRETENDS his expeditions to Britain were successful." But does he? I read, in his Commentaries, just about the same implicit confession of lack of real success that Mr. Mundy gives explicitly. Cæsar simply states the case objectively. He doesn't call himself a damn fool, to be sure; but he claims no more than that his second, and more successful, expedition resulted in the winning of some hostages and plunder, the raiding to London, and the levy of tribute. The tribute, by the way, could not be enforced.

Nothing could be more misleading than Mr. Mundy's statement: "And whatever Cæsar *wrote* about those expeditions, what his men had to *say* about them can be surmised fairly accurately from the fact that Rome left Britain severely alone for several generations." Scarcely less misleading is the expression "a successful general does not usually sneak away by night," and the assertion that "he cleared out of Britain again as fast as possible." True, he did clear out as fast as possible, but not for the reason Mr. Mundy assumes. He had received word that Gaul was on fire with incipient rebellion behind him, and he was good enough general to abandon a new conquest persistence in which would have cut him off from his sole base of supplies and source of reenforcements. For that matter, Cæsar never had any intention of conquering Britain on those expeditions. He knew he didn't have men enough.

He had two purposes: one, to find out what Britain and its people were like, and secondly—the the more vital reason—to convince the Britons that they'd better stop sending aid to the rebellious tribes in Gaul. In this purpose he succeeded. If he didn't make a single permanent conquest in the island, at least the Britons kept out of Gaul for four hundred years afterward, except as they came, during the third and fourth centuries A. D., as Roman subjects.

The real reason why neither Cæsar nor his successors Augustus and Tiberius attempted to invade Britain again was that they had their hands too full elsewhere. Cæsar was no sooner back than his daughter's death drew him to Italy and the uprising in Gaul brought him back there again to hold down his earlier conquests; from Gaul he had to march into Italy to save his position and his very neck from the envious nobles and the Senate; and then he was up to his neck in civil war. From then on he had his hands full pacifying the Roman world and keeping it pacified. He died before he could get his hands free for fresh conquests. His successors had all they could do to keep the Germans from invading Gaul and Rome. Mark well: just as soon as Rome got a real breathing spell, under Claudius, Britain was invaded again—and Rome thenceforth kept on till she conquered Britain and made it a province. If Cæsar had had the time and the man-power that Claudius had, he would have done the job himself; but he considered his life as worth more than another province, and his rule more important than conquest. If he had been able to undertake it, his men would have followed eagerly. Both Plutarch and Suetonous pay tribute to his marvelous ascendency over the hearts of his men.

CÆSAR did call the Britons barbarians, but he *did not* call them savages. Moreover, the word *barbarus* (which we translate "barbarian") did not mean the same thing to the Roman that it means to us. The Roman, like the Greek, called all peoples *barbari* who didn't belong to the Mediterranean world. The word has its origin not in any undervaluation of foreign cultures, but in the uncouth effect produced on the Greco-Roman ear by the sound of a foreign speech. Cæsar clearly and faithfully describes the Britons as possessing two distinct cultures, one of which (closely related to that of Gaul) he describes as characterized by settled cities, coinage, the use of iron, and agriculture. This doesn't look as if he reported them barbarians in our sense of the word. I don't agree with Mr. Mundy that they were the "waning tag-end of a high civilization;" the archeological evidence shows clearly that they were rather a semi-civilized people well on the up-grade and rising fast. They had fine skill in the use of metals, in all forms of art not concerned with the human figure, and—pretty certainly—in poetry. But their poetry was not written down; they had no consecutive alphabet till they learned the Roman alphabet from their conquerors. They were mixed, true; but they were in general of two types, which are not clearly accounted for by the Roman writers; it is certain only that at least two Celtic stocks went to make them, and that they had absorbed a large part of the earlier stone-age inhabitants of the island.

MR. MUNDY is all off on the Samothracian Mysteries, largely because he conjectures so much without evidence. He hits the nail on the head only when he says that they "have baffled most historians" (I should say *all* historians except the ruddy guessers) and that "nothing whatever is known of their actual teaching." They were highly respected—especially by the Romans! It is not at all certain—in fact, it is highly unlikely—that "all the Mysteries were based on the theory of universal brotherhood." We have no record of a single Mystery that so concerned itself. All the Mysteries were concerned directly with the cult of a definite god or goddess, or combinations of gods and goddesses, and what little we know about them indicates that they may have celebrated various forms of a widely distributed fertility cult. The Mysteries of Samothrace are known (and this is about all we do know about them) to have had much to do with the worship of the Cabiri; and consequently there is good ground to suppose, as the Greeks and Romans did suppose, that these Mysteries were more or less lascivious. But it was a natural and relatively naive lasciviousness, such as has been associated with fertility cults all over the world. (See Frazer; "Golden Bough;" "Magic.")

I can't see what Mr. Mundy is getting at by dragging in Freemasonry; there isn't the slightest relation between it or its ritual or beliefs with those of any ancient classical mystery. His statement that "no initiate of any genuine Mystery would go so far as to consider human sacrifice or any form of preventable cruelty" is little short of marvelous. Has he never heard of the Mysteries of Cybele, with their ghastly licentiousness and mutilation? And these were genuine Mysteries. Druidism does not class with the Mysteries, and has no connection with those of Samothrace.

THE statement that Cæsar loathed the Druids hasn't a shred of evidence to back it; he gives a clear and not altogether unsympathetic account of the Druids. To be sure, he says that they practised human sacrifice; and the absolute truth of his statement is borne out by the independent testimony of Diodorus and the high authority of Tacitus. The thing is proved—to deny Druidical human sacrifice is to deny every contemporary authority that we have. For that matter, human sacrifice has been practised pretty much all over Europe at one time or another.

Mr. Mundy says that Cæsar admits, in his Commentaries, that he burned the Druids alive. I can't find any such admission in the Commentaries, and I've been through them with a fine-tooth comb, checking up by searching all the best Cæsar-lexicons. Maybe I have overlooked something, but I don't think so. If I have, I'll be glad to be corrected. Nor did Cæsar's enemies in Rome, who raised every possible accusation against him, even mention any such thing as this.

NOW for Mr. Mundy's scatter-gun assault on the Romans generally. It comes down to a general assertion that they were responsible for most of the cruelty and militarism that has vexed the world since their times, that they were brutal, inartistic, and inefficient in everything but discipline. He admits their success as engineers and lawmakers, but blames our modern social ills on the part played by the Roman law in our own legal development. Well—

The Greeks were notoriously as licentious in their best days as the Romans were in their worst. Systematic immorality was practised as a part of Assyrio-Babylonian and Phœnician religion. The temples of Aphrodite at Corinth and Paphos were public brothels. See what Burton has to say as to Moslem immorality. The fact is that the Romans were no worse than any other ancient people (the Hebrews always excepted); and for a large part of their career they were better than most. Their decline began with their conquest of Greece, when they came into contact with the degenerate practises of that country. But the Greeks used those practises even in the time of Pericles and before. Why pick on the Romans particularly?

NO CRUELTY ever reported of the Romans ever surpassed the treatment of the Athenians by the victorious Syracusans; the Persians regularly surpassed them in savage brutality; the Assyrians were a byword for cruelty. Indeed, no ancient people ever treated an enemy with gentleness so far as I know. The Hebrews were as bad as the worst in this respect—read Judges and Chronicles. Their very entrance into the Promised Land is one bloody record of the utter extermination of the previous inhabitants. Cruelty? Militarism? You can't beat the Hebrews for that. Nor could the Romans ever surpass the militarism of Sparta, of Athens, of Persia—except that they had better success, thanks to that discipline which Mr. Mundy concedes them. Rome was no more a destroyer than any other pre-Christian empire—or some Christian ones. In art, it is true, they imitated first the Etruscans and then the Greeks; but they imitated both darned well—as the early Japanese artists imitated the Chinese.

WHY pick on the Classics? Does Mr. Mundy mean to say that "we owe nine-tenths of the false philosophy and the mercenary imperialism that has brought the world to its present state of perplexity and distress" to the study in our schools of such writers as Virgil, Horace, the great naturalist Pliny, the gentle, humane Pliny Secundus, Seneca, Cicero (noble philosophers if the world has ever had any), Lucretius (who anticipated Darwin in his philosophy of evolution), and the historians Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus? Does he ignore the fact that many of the Christian Fathers derived much of their inspiration from the Roman Classics?

Yes, certain Roman provincial governors systematically looted their trusts of everything fine and precious they could lay their hands on; but balance against the avaricious Verres the gentle Cicero who prosecuted him; balance the well-loved governor Sertorius against the plundering of Syria; balance Cæsar's own reformation of the provincial governments against the charges laid against him. And the fact emerges that, during the greater part of Rome's empire her provinces and colonies were so well governed that they would have counted it a calamity to be free from Rome. Britain herself, when Rome abandoned her, wailed piteously for her yoke to be restored; and the Britons came to regard Rome as the well-beloved mother, to whose defense against the barbarians they voluntarily contributed a legion of their own best and bravest, though the Saxon was beating at the door.

The extinction of Rome by the Germanic barbarians plunged the European world into darkness for centuries. The remains of Roman law alone made possible the erection of stable kingdoms; and at the end of the Middle Ages the rediscovery of the best of Roman and Greek literature flooded Europe with a new tide of humane learning.

ANOTHER word about Cæsar. It apparently didn't occur to Mr. Mundy to ask why he conquered Gaul, and invaded Germany and Britain. When he went to Cisalpine Gaul (already Roman—made so in a series of campaigns to save Rome itself from Gallic invasion), he found the Helvetii about to pour in from the Alps and menace Rome with a new tide of conquest. To save Italy he had to trounce the Helvetii; and from then on he was forced to extend Roman sway over all Transalpine Gaul, lest the Gauls themselves invade Italy, forced from their own homes by a threatening flood of German immigration. He invaded Germany to teach the Germans that it wasn't safe to try to dismember the Roman empire. Had he not tackled them when he did, Rome would have been German within a hundred years. He succeeded so well that he prolonged Rome's life for at least three centuries. He made his attempt on Britain because the southern Britons were perpetually giving aid and comfort to the rebellious Gauls. All in all, he, and he alone, saved Italy from being swamped by a semi-barbaric flood of merciless enemies.

I CAN'T quit without assailing Mr. Mundy's most vulnerable point. He says there is plenty of information from ancient British, Welsh, and Irish sources to refute much of what Cæsar writes. Giving Mr. Mundy full credit for the sincerity which always characterizes his writings, I rise to say that this statement shows him to be absolutely misinformed. There does not exist one shred of British, Welsh or Irish writing of any age or genuineness which touches on Cæsar in the remotest degree. No Old Irish or British document so much as mentions his life or conquests. The earliest document touching Romans in relation to Britain and written by a Briton is the work of Gildas (6th century A. D.), and Gildas not only calls himself a Roman citizen but lustily bawls out all Britons who have forgotten their faith to Rome. And this a century after the Romans had given the Briton up—after the fall of Rome itself!

The Welsh are the descendants of those Britons who sought refuge in Wales from the Saxons. They have no writings which criticise or refute Cæsar. No Irish, Welsh or British writing, nor even tradition, so much as verges on a criticism or denial of anything he ever wrote. I wonder if Mr. Mundy has by any chance been misled by the 12th century History of the Britons by Geoffrey of Monmouth? Geoffrey does handle Cæsar very severely. But it must be remembered that Geoffrey was a faker of the first water, so esteemed by his own contemporaries as well as by modern scholars. Giraldus Cambrensis has exposed him prettily. Geoffrey didn't know any history except what he got from Roman writers anyway; and he faked that, in his desire to make out the Britons as older than the Romans. He foisted on the world that bum old legend of the establishment of the kingdom of Britain by Brut, who was supposed to be a descendant of Æneas in more direct line that the Romans. It's all poppycock.

TO SUM up: in almost all essentials I hold Mr. Mundy blinded by prejudice; and it seems plain that he has got his material in a very one-sided way, ignoring all the evidence in Cæsar's favor, and accepting as gospel all the billingsgate of Cæsar's enemies. In his reaction to the blind following of Cæsar's own statements, he has run full-tilt into the opposite extreme.—Arthur G. Brodeur.

PROFESSOR BRODEUR'S letter did not reach us in time to be sent to Mr. Mundy along with the other letters called forth by his original expression of opinion. So Mr. Mundy's following letter is a reply to all the others but, of course, not a reply to Professor Brodeur's. There is no attempt to cite book and verse in detail, but you'll remember that in his answer to Arthur D. Howden Smith Mr. Mundy cited them in abundance, giving evidence that his opinions had been formed only after wide research and a weighing of much evidence.

Later, if he cares to do so, he should be given opportunity to answer Professor Brodeur in rebuttal.

As to whether Mr. Mundy's estimate of Cæsar has been proved unsound I am not prepared to say. I neither endorsed nor combatted it in the beginning and all that I've since learned about Cæsar only convinces me the more that it's rash to venture any final opinion on such a matter without far more research than I'm in a position to give. But again, as in the beginning, I thank Mr. Mundy for having jolted me out of my unthinking rut. He made me stop accepting without thought or question the usual conception of a character in history. Perhaps that usual conception is correct, perhaps not. Julius Cæsar himself is no important issue in my life, but I'm glad that Mr. Mundy's iconoclastic views have made me change from a sheep-like acceptance of other people's views to an open mind. Some of you, as these letters have shown, were in no need of being jolted into thinking for themselves, but others were and I hope that, like me, they got the jolt and are glad they did.

Open-mindedness and tolerance—these are of more value than the mere facts about Cæsar.

Point Loma, California.

There are some redoubtable antagonists to answer, some of whom have chosen to spread this discussion of Julius Cæsar and Rome over such a wide field that it is utterly impossible to compress a detailed answer within the pages of one magazine. On my shelves there are at least two hundred thousand pages of Roman history, some of them in remarkably small type. Professor Gibbon required a number of volumes in which to unfold his theory of Rome's decline and fall; and it is not likely that the editor would let me write any such essay for Camp-Fire. I am obliged to have to say, then, to begin with that my statements are based on intensive study of classical as well as modern authors, and that I have devoted all my spare time for several weeks in going over notes in order to be able to define my argument clearly, but there won't be much room to give chapter and verse.

THE first point I would like to make is this: that although, because far more than fifty per cent of the world's inhabitants are decent fellows, some of us are able to enjoy a qualified contentment, nevertheless there are not many who pretend that the world is in a reasonably decent state. It surely might be better managed, and there must be a reason why it is not better managed. I attribute the blame very largely to the greatly exaggerated estimate of the value of Rome's civilization that has been drilled into generation after generation for centuries.

There are two things that I hate with all my heart. The first is standardized opinion, cut and dried and handed out to us by those who do not believe in encouraging independent thought. The second (which is like unto it!) is that attitude of mind which summons the mob to come and help murder any one who dares to form opinions of his own. There are all sorts of gradations of both those mental habits, nearly all of which are quite unconsciously acquired and practised; and the most worth while thing, but the most difficult thing in the world, is to break away from them.

ONE or two other axioms: the world is much older than Rome, and in the history of the world, viewed largely, the Roman empire is only an episode. To quote George Bernard Shaw, "He who only knows the official side of a controversy knows less than nothing about it." We must not pretend to ourselves that human nature has changed very much in a couple of thousand years, or that those who wrote the histories of Rome for wealthy patrons were reliable—were any more reliable, that is, than the biographers of modern personages, or than the gentlemen who wrote our war-time news. We have a full right to select the evidence, accepting this, rejecting that, and to use our own recent history as a guide to what is likely and what is utterly improbable.

Like most people, I was raised under the Roman influence; that is to say, I received what was humorously described as a classical education, and the text-books from which I was taught, and the teachers who distributed reward and punishment, agreed to inculcate the doctrine that Rome's empire was a good thing for the world and admirable as a whole if damnable in detail. We schoolboys had no more will or inclination to break loose from that instruction than a sheep has will to break loose from its fold or a horse from its stable.

It should be borne in mind that for centuries the education of the western world was mainly, when not entirely, in the hands of the inheritors of Roman tradition; that governments have regarded Rome as the fountain of law (which she was not; Rome learned her law from Greece in B.C. 449) and have consequently regarded Rome as the first parent of their own exceeding wisdom, yet without so often demonstrating wisdom as to excite our veneration; and that for many centuries Rome has claimed to be the fountain-head of Christianity, a fact which has had an enormous influence on our mental attitude toward anything that has any bearing on Rome itself. I am not going to touch on the religious question beyond thus briefly drawing attention to that one phase of it.

The purpose of the Roman empire was to make life comfortable for the Romans and to keep other people out of mischief. It is the tendency of all governments to destroy liberty in order to make their own task easier; and if the end should justify the means, then all we need to consider is Rome's end, and for that we may look around us. Here, today, is the net result of Roman theories—war, mistrust, rancor, suspicion, hatred, misgovernment, and a world not half so civilized as China was two thousand years ago.

I do not believe that even the most glorious end can justify abominable means; and Rome's end was, and is, inglorious. Nor do I believe that bad means can accomplish a good end in any instance; and it was looking for causes of present conditions that led me to study Rome's history, to compare it as far as possible with the history of other nations, and to try to estimate Rome's influence as an element in modern problems.

Rome from the beginning was a robber, in a state of almost constant war with all her neighbors. Her early civilization was certainly not higher than that of the Teuts was later on, at the time when they overran Rome. Up to and including the time of Julius Cæsar there is nothing bad enough that can be said of Rome, of her civilization, her morals, her social conditions, her dealings with other nations, her lawlessness, greed and hypocrisy. The point can not be argued; it is enough to read the histories written by Romans themselves who desired to paint a favorable picture of their city.

WE ARE asked to believe that Julius Cæsar suddenly was born out of the blue (he, personally claimed descent from the goddess Venus), and that by winning the votes of the vilest mob that the world of that day knew and setting forth to conquer and plunder all the hitherto unconquered nations within reach, he changed that mob into world-saviors! Rome, which could not manage her own affairs, and which permitted Cæsar to be murdered by as cowardly and corrupt a gang of politicians as ever disgraced a nations's record, suddenly became wise enough and fit to manage the affairs of the whole of Europe!

The fact, I believe, is that she established principles of misrule from which the United States and all other countries in the world are suffering today.

Julius Cæsar was undoubtedly the greatest soldier of his day. He found the surrounding peoples weak and took advantage of his opportunity. The Gauls, for instance, whose civilization must have been enormously superior to Rome's, were at the end of a cycle of activity, at war among themselves and possessed of no capable general who could command a united army. They derived their civilization from ancient Egypt (see, for instance, "Wales, her Origins, Struggles and Later History, Institutions and Manners, By Gilbert Stone. Harper.) Cæsar, doubtless with the same motives that induced our Mr. Creel to slander the Germans, and induced the Germans to describe ourselves as savages, recorded every instance he could find of Gaulish turpitude and denied them credit for any superior civilization. Nevertheless, we are again asked to believe (by those who believe Cæsar) that these same uncivilized Gauls absorbed the glorious Roman civilization and surpassed it in a generation. We find in the reign of Augustus that the Gauls were already living better in every way than the Romans, and that Romans were being taught by them.

A people's ability to forge ahead in response to energy injected from abroad is in proportion to the recentness and height of its own past civilization. When civilization touches an inferior race it usually kills it out. Rome went to school to Virgil (whose name is Gaulish) and to Seneca, Quintilian and many others from the conquered "barbarian" provinces. Can you imagine Roosevelt going to school to a Redskin, or Cecil Rhodes to a Hottentot?

Actually, Rome herself never became civilized, in the sense that she originated any of the arts; she imported all her culture from the conquered provinces, thoroughly despised it, patronized it as the *nouveaux riches* invariably do, and in the end was swamped because she could not understand it.

A FAVORITE argument used by most of my opponents is that the world was rotten at that time and that Rome made the best of the situation; that yes, Rome was a robber and exploiter, but so was everybody else; that Rome's method was undoubtedly outrageous, but that she gave the world good government.

Did she? Or did the world achieve good government in spite of Rome? And was that government so good? Remember: art, music, medicine, science, philosophy, everything worth while had vanished from the earth after three or four hundred years of Rome's predominance. Inculcated adult docility can not rightly be called good government, unless your standard of perfection is the stable.

I do not believe for one minute, after reading everything I can find in Julius Cæsar's favor, that he visualized the Roman empire. He was a soldier, and he proved himself able to defeat all comers, intellectually as well as on the field of battle; he was a man of titanic energy, who went mad, believing himself to be a god, and who died in the midst of preparations to invade India by way of Persia, with a view to surpassing the exploits of Alexander.

OCTAVIAN (Augustus) was a man of a totally different character. Cæsar had left the known world practically conquered and Augustus spent a long life busily perfecting the machine that should control the world. He appears to have labored honestly and with prodigious genius; and if not he, then later emperors undoubtedly did imagine and produce an empire in which every man regarded himself as a Roman.

But what did they mean by Roman? With the exception of Augustus, the emperors who produced the condition we are asked to praise were themselves not Romans; neither were the ablest men whom they employed. Rome itself was an unhealthy city, which even Julius Cæsar contemplated abandoning for Alexandria; and the empire was called Roman for centuries after Rome's decay, when Roman blood had died out or had become so mixed as to be hardly traceable. They meant they had accepted Rome's theory of government, her method and her ideals. What did those amount to?

HERE is an extract from Tacitus' Life of Agricola, quoting the speech of the British chieftan Calgacus, on the eve of a battle after eight years' resistance to Roman arms: (Remember: Tacitus was a Roman.)

"These plunderers of the world, after exhausting the land by their devastations—stimulated by avarice, if their enemy be rich; by ambition, if poor; unsatiated by the East and by the West; the only people who behold wealth and indigence with equal avidity. To ravage, to slaughter, to usurp under false titles, they call empire; and where they make a desert they call it peace. Our children and relations—are torn away from us by levies to serve in foreign lands. Our wives and sisters—are polluted under names of friendship and hospitality. Our estates and possessions are consumed in tributes; our grain in contributions. Even our bodies are worn down amidst stripes and insults in clearing woods and draining marshes. Acquiring renown from our discords and dissensions, they convert the faults of their enemies to the glory of their own army; an army compounded of the most different nations, which success alone has kept together." (The omissions are made to save space. In full, the text is even stronger.)

And here is the gist of Agricola's address to the Roman troops on the eve of the same battle:

"It is now the eighth year, my fellow soldiers, in which, under the high auspices of the Roman empire, by your valor and perseverence you have been conquering Britain. We have proceeded beyond the limits of former commanders and former armies. We have arms in our hands, and in these we have everything. The bravest of the Britons have long since fallen: the remaining number consists solely of the cowardly and the spiritless Close a struggle of fifty years with one great day; and convince your countrymen that to the army ought not to be imputed either the protraction of the war or the causes of the rebellion."

We know what we all had to say about Abdul Hamid when he proposed to settle the Armenian question by abolishing the Armenians. I myself can remember some stinging remarks addressed to me personally in reference to the conduct of the British army in South Africa. But it seems it was a Roman who invented the delightful theory that men who resist invasion by all means in their power for fifty years, are cowards and spiritless: Nevertheless, Agricola was one of the Romans whose memory I was taught at school to cherish, and there are actually hundreds of learned professors who have written books to prove among other things that Agricola's campaign was a blessing to Britain.

AND that brings us to another angle of the argument. Several correspondents have made the point, that the Gauls, after tasting rebellion in A.D. 70, decided to adhere to Rome. But it must be borne in mind that Cæsar had trounced Gaul thoroughly a hundred years before, and that after him Augustus had imposed the Roman system and reorganized society. In the result, the Gauls had become incapable of self-rule. The same applies to the Britons, and to any other people Rome had conquered—just as it applies today to India, Cuba the Philippines, Egypt, Algeria or any other country that has been absorbed and exploited on the Roman pattern. The alternative to Roman rule was a period of protracted anarchy. And just as in India today the native princes and all those who derive income and authority from the British system are pro-British, and most of the wealthier merchants dread the thought of the anarchy that would inevitably follow the overthrow of British rule, so it was in Gaul and in all the other conquered Roman provinces. It was the curse of the Roman system that, while it strove to unite the world under one rule, and more or less accomplished that, it reduced it to one dead-level of mediocrity and deprived its members of ability to rule themselves.

Pleasure in living, progress, civilization, consist in differences—not similarities—of opinion, habit, manners, aims. But our schools are patterned on Rome's method, our politics are fashioned on Rome's principle. Might, either in the shape of a victorious army or an organized mob yelling catch words, is right. And *"vae victis!"*

The average number of men of noble character is probably fairly constant all down the ages. Rome seems to have had at least her average proportion, and was favored, I think, with more than the average number of rulers of great ability. Augustus, Tiberius, the Antonines, for instance, were men of great talent, breadth of view and constancy of purpose. They were able to draw from the whole known world for their lieutenants, and if their principle had been sound it is likely that Rome's heyday would have lasted longer.

NOTHING seems more obvious to one who reads comparative history than that energy moves in cycles, raising first one people, then another. Rome's rise was probably inevitable, and it well may be that the condition of all other nations at that time was, from a standpoint of energy, inferior to Rome's. But Rome had been psychologized by Julius Cæsar, who was deified as a sort of conquering god; and though she had the strength to subdue Europe, just as, for instance, England had the strength to subdue India, and Spain the Philippines, she had not the imagination necessary to encourage, or enforce, that liberty of thought and independence of view that are necessary to the progress of the world.

The course of England in India is an extremely interesting parallel. (There are others nearer home, but it is always easier to see faults farther off.) It may be that India was ripe for conquest and that if the British had not defeated the French India, would have become a French possession—just as the Gauls might have fallen to the Teuts if Rome had not stepped in. But the point is, that England has exactly copied Rome's mistake by making India apparently incapable of self-government, forever dependent on foreign troops to keep the peace within her own borders and on foreign officials to prevent corruption, by trying to make the Indians think they are members of the British empire and by imposing on India systems of education and trade that are totally foreign to her genius. She has provided roads, and peace within India's borders. She has administered India much more honestly than Rome ever administered a conquered country, and she has not permitted slavery in the form of legal ownership of the person. But because Britons were all educated in the Roman tradition, she has never had the wit to see that liberty and independance are the things which should be forced on to a backward nation—not obedience and dependence.

MOST of us like slavery and dependence in one form or another, although it is frightfully bad for us. And today, as a result of the Roman tradition, we are all trying to legislate ourselves into kingdom come and to devolve responsibility upon some form of central government, whose duty shall be to take the blame for everything and absolve us individuals from the necessity of thinking or of doing anything except amuse ourselves and say "yes, ma'am" to the rigid opinion of the day.

It is not nearly so important to discover that Cæsar was personally vicious as well as brilliant, or that Rome was unscrupulous as well as energetic, as to realize that Rome's first principles were rotten—with the result that her ablest men, though they strove like titans to resist the tide, could do nothing for the world's eventual progress. Europe was swamped under Rome's decay because Rome had taught false principles and had enforced them.

MR. JAMES HATHAWAY remarks that the Roman legion was no more hard boiled than any other body of men would have been under similar conditions. That is probably true. But when he goes on to say that the women of the plundered country don't object, he reminds me of the Cornish fisherman who used to take me sailing when I was a boy. I found him, one day, skinning a live conger-eel, and I suggested that anyhow he might kill the eel first. He shifted his pipe to the other corner of his mouth, looked tolerantly scornful, said "Lor' bless ye, boy, he likes it!" —and went on skinning. But just as his was a decent old fisherman's point of view, so is Mr. Hathaway's an experienced soldier's, and I can differ from Mr. Hathaway without imputing anything but kindly motives to him. I don't doubt he and I could swap some interesting yarns.

Another man writes that he will skip my stories in future because I have taken an opposite view to his regarding Rome and Cæsar. I forgive him, on condition that he will read up Roman history and form his own opinions at first hand. I would much rather set you all thinking than have you all agree with me. I surely do enjoy a man who has a stout opinion based on real investigation of the facts.

Hugh Pendexter writes, wondering whether Cæsar really was such a great general after all. I know Hugh, and the State of Maine, a lot too well to argue with him. When Hugh makes that sort of suggestion it means he has facts up his sleeve and is trying to inveigle me into taking the other side. So Hugh wins, until I get time to study strategy—and even so, I'm afraid he would study it more quickly and blind me with science. No, Hugh, nothing doing. I won't be drawn.

Mr. H. G. Patterson seems to me to hit one nail on the head when he suggests that, however right I may or may not be about Cæsar and Rome—"if we go to our children with all our doubts, various views and contradictions, they would not get started on any history." I lean toward Shaw's view of it, however. Shaw suggests, with his usual clarified vehemence, that the soundest teaching by the ablest schoolmaster is worth nothing unless the ablest available opponent of that teaching shall receive an equal hearing, thus encouraging the youngster to form independent judgment after hearing both sides. (When I went to school I was cruelly punished if I dared to form a judgment of my own.)

And there is an alternative to teaching Roman history. How about comparative history? Why not study the Chinese, Indians and Phenicians, all of whom had a civilization vastly higher than Rome's? Giles' "Gems of Chinese Literature" is a much better book than anything the Romans have bequeathed to us.

The Roman empire was conducted on principles diametrically opposite to those taught by all of the world's really great philosophers. So, if Roman history must be taught in schools, why not teach it in such manner as to point out that the secret of all progress is in thinking by the individual and results from individual effort, or whether in painting, music, sculpture, writing, medicine, surgery, science, in fact, in anything except slavery. Rome specialized in slavery. She made it as picturesque, efficient and commercially profitable as it could be made. And Rome fell. So will we, if we continue in her footsteps.—TALBOT MUNDY.

WELL, Mr. Mundy certainly doesn't dodge trouble. He has the temerity to end up by comparing the civilizations of China, India and Phenicia with that of Rome! The nerve of it! Whoever heard of such a thing? And he even dares to say that the civilizations of such countries as those were superior to Rome's!

That is likely to be the general reaction to such a comparison, but let us of Camp-Fire be a little less hasty and a little more tolerant. Suppose that, before we either disagree or agree with Mr. Mundy, we first of all ask ourselves whether we really know sufficient about all these civilizations to support a final opinion of our own. And second that we ask ourselves to just what extent we can prove that our sources of information are reliable and sufficiently numerous. And third, how thoroughly have we weighed, analyzed, compared, challenged and reasoned about our information and its sources?

Personally, though I know a little about each of those civilizations, I realize I'd be a fool to attempt proving any one of them better than the other. The best I can do is to know I don't know, to be wide open to more testimony and to refuse steadfastly to accept anybody's verdict until I can hear *all* available testimony and try to reason out a conclusion of my own. But some of you are far better equipped to pass judgment than I. I've an idea there are not many people in the world who know those four civilizations with sufficient thoroughness to compare them with any real intelligence, but there are quite a number among us who are pretty well versed on one or more of these three other civilizations Mr. Mundy mentions. Harold Lamb, for example, can tell us quite a little about China that most of us don't know. Won't some of you who know start the ball rolling with surveys of one or more of these civilizations? Let's not call it an argument but an examination—the object being to find out the truth, not the rather empty accomplishment of proving any given theory sound or unsound.—A. S. H.

A BRIEF word from Albert William Stone in connection with his story in this issue. Camp-Fire always likes to know just how much actual historical fact lies back of our stories.

Denver, Colorado.

It is a story of the old Southwest, about sixty years ago, when the old Western Cattle Trail was infested with hostile Indians and life was picturesquely uncertain for the cowmen. I think you will find it pretty accurate where accuracy is essential, as I spent a lot of time looking up facts. Joe Loving and another pioneer cowman actually stood off a band of Comanches in a buffalo wallow, somewhere around 1856.—ALBERT W. STONE.

THERE goes the finger-print system! At least there go the present methods of using it and the far-reaching dependence hitherto attached to it. A letter from E. E. Harriman of "A. A." and our writers' brigade. I carefully omit, from his letter to me, the detailed description of his method of transferring finger-prints. It's certainly ingenious but not the kind of information to broadcast.

For a long time fingerprints have been held absolute proof of identity. If a man were arrested for a crime and his fingerprints were found upon anything at the scene of the crime he was cooked.

FOR twenty years my friend Milton Carlson, handwriting expert, has claimed that this was unjust. Consistently he has insisted that there must at least be proof of opportunity. The accused must have been in the vicinity beyond question. Police detectives scoffed.

The chief of detectives in Los Angeles was James Hosick. James held with Sir E. R. Henry of Scotland Yard as to the finality of fingerprint evidence. Milton Carlson went to see Hosick.

They argued. Then Milton said goodby and offered his hand, with a laugh, saying they would not quarrel over it. Hosick shook hands.

A week later came Milton Carlson, solemn as an owl, frowning and serious. He took Hosick to task for entering his office and ransacking his files. He said those files were private, valuable and not to be meddled with. Hosick got mad, swore, claimed he had never seen the files in question. Carlson wagged an unbelieving head.

"Then how the —— did your fingerprints get on this revolver, which is kept in those files and has never been out of the office since I bought it two years ago, until now?"

Jim Hosick studied the gun. Four detectives examined it. They got the fingerprint card of Hosick from the files. The bothered and puzzled chief swore he never saw the gun or touched it before, but acknowledged the prints were his own.

"You are right, Hosick," said Carlson. "I took your prints when I shook hands with you the last time I was here. I transferred them to the gun, thumb on left side, index finger on right. Do I win?"

AGAIN Carlson went to Valdez, Alaska, to help defend a young man charged with burglary. Bloody prints on a broken light of glass had been asserted to be his. In open court all the Government-called experts swore there could be no mistake, as they had found eleven homologous characteristics in the blood prints, corresponding to the finger of Virgil Rich. Then Milton Carlson went on the stand.

Before he got through with the case he had proved that one fingerprint shown in the book by Sir E. R. Henry, acknowledged father of the present system of fingerprint evidence gathering, held fourteen homologous characteristics corresponding to those offered in evidence. Since the print in the book was taken from a prisoner more than forty years old at the time and the time was ten years prior to the act for which Virgil Rich, aged twenty-four, was on trial, the claims of the experts were upset and Virgil Rich acquitted.

"IT IS not enough to discover points that classify," says the expert who faces a world of experts. "It is necessary to discover a few that positively identify. The fingerprint experts of today are infatuated with classification, rather than identification."

So my friend has given to the world something new. Others are on the same tack now, but I happen to know that Carlson was the one who pioneered in this line. It is enough to make one wonder how many men may have been punished for the crimes of others.

One man has been acquitted in Australia already, because of the evidence offered in that court at Valdez, by Carlson. The jury said in effect that there must be corroborative evidence. One man was executed in America, after half a dozen reputable men had testified under oath to his presence in a distant town at the time the crime was committed.

I have seen forged fingerprints in blood on three cheap butcher-knives, all done by Carlson for demonstration. He proved forgery in the —— case.

Milton Carlson showed me his transferred prints, without telling me how it was done. At once my mind cut a caper and I knew how I could do it. At the Adventurers' Club dinner I told Milt I could lift a print off almost anything and place it on another object and he said he was willing to swap modus operandi with me. Then he said my method was one that had never occurred to him, but would surely work perfectly.—E. E. Harriman.

IN THE contents page of a past issue we characterized "Stummicks," by L. Paul, as a story of the Great Lakes instead of the New England coast. A stupid blunder on our part that should be pointed out lest the author be considered guilty of having tide-rips and other odd things working on the Great Lakes.

A PERSONAL letter, not meant for publication, so in printing it I give no clue to the writer's name. I couldn't bring myself not to pass it on to the rest of you.

Brooklyn, New York.

I regret I have not the honor to be one of those old deep water captains of sailing-ship days, although I hold a master's license which unfortunately I shall never use on this dot in the cosmic universe.

MY EXPERIENCES in sail were gained during ten years before the mast on board lofty ships six times around Cape Horn before I reached my twentieth year. That was a long, very long time ago. Sometimes memory takes me gently in hand and leads me back to the Utopian days of youth, health and strength when this old world was a great toy bestowed by an Infinite Intelligence to compensate those in whom dwelt the restless spirit of adventure. Not lonesome days, to be sure, those days of close friendships and comradeships, cemented by joint ownership of preferred stock in hardships off Cape "Stiff" and rolling weeks running the easting down. Common stock in pleasant trade winds, tropical sunlight and morning watches with wet decks warm to bare feet and the aroma of coffee and fried bacon in the air. Wild nights ashore, nights of sensuous and regretful delights in which the less than commonplace was changed into an Arabian Nights environment by the magic of mind, transforming and concentrating into one wild hour the sacred essence of a life of years.

IT SEEMS weird as one recalls it that, when seamen threw their dunnage into a forecastle and met for the first time on earth, they subconsciously recognized each other as brothers; bestowed and answered to improvised nicknames, told of their girls and heeded respectfully the "Look here, young fellow" of the oldest man among them. To one not familiar with them it would appear they had all met before and knew each other well and long. At the end of a voyage, while they took their parting drink as they bid each other farewell (in most cases an eternal farewell, as they rarely met again on earth), they silently felt, deep in their souls, that somewhere or somehow in the natural course of events they would meet again. Consequently, their farewells were optimistic, seldom sentimental or sad. Let us hope they right gladly meet again—somewhere.

An English poet once said that Heaven is Love, Friendship and Comradeship; while Hell is loneliness and lack of all these. It would seem that the lower Hell is the lonesomeness of a great city. To overcome it I read the poets and among them Bill Adams' prose and poems of the sea. Even his prose is poetry which can emanate only from the great heart of a true man passing loud singing down the sea. He is a voice from the voiceless who have passed unheard; whose inner joys and sorrows remain untold and unrevealed until one inspired appears chanting their sagas—the sagas of the silent ones who have gone before—B. C. D.

A LETTER concerning jujutsu, wrestling and boxing from one of our own professional wrestlers. Mr. Thorne has been wrestling instructor at University of Michigan, Detroit Junior College and College of Detroit and has made a close study of jujutsu as well as of western wrestling.

Detroit, Michigan.

I am very interested in the discussion on jujutsu. After a long life or wrestling, study and experiment I have formed opinions that may differ from many others on the merits of this art. I have wrestled professionally some fifteen years, meeting Gotch, Zbysko, Lewis and hundreds of other wrestlers, also for many years challenging all comers among local strong men, in country districts and towns. I have made a long study of all kinds of wrestling and a close study of judo or jujutsu.

THERE is probably no art or sport about which so little is really known by the average person and so many wild theories reported as the system of Japanese wrestling and self-defense.

Judo, or familiarly known as jujutsu, incorrectly called jujitsu, is an art combining several branches of training—physical culture, abdominal control and a wonderful system of defensive and offensive grips and releases. Many persons have the conviction that any Japanese wrestler has but to touch the most herculean Westerner and so bring him crashing to the ground, paralyzed and helpless. On the other hand many otherwise well versed athletes sneer at jujutsu and think they could handle with ease any Jap alive.

Both these beliefs are far wrong and have been proved so time and again. American wrestlers have defeated time and again Japanese experts while now and then some famous jujutsu expert will gain a victory over a western wrestler, but only when his opponent is clad in judo wrestling dress.

AS TO the far-stretched system of supposed nerve and muscle secrets, these are mostly greatly exaggerated. Surgeons and anatomists know that there are no exposed nerves or muscles that can be lightly struck, twisted or handled in any way to produce paralysis death, or even unconsciousness. True, there are the sharp, hard blows of a fighter on the jaw, a blow to the heart and the neck chop. These actions are, however, known to most every one and fail many times.

American wrestlers who spend a lifetime in active wrestling and know every worth while hold, laugh at the supposed esoteric secrets, death-locks and unrevealed paralyzing combinations.

A famous American light-heavy-weight champion wrestler, Edward Santel, beat the best jujutsu men on a visit to Japan some few years ago.

Judo is wonderful against the average man, but so also are catch-as-catch-can and boxing. There are certain fairly sensitive nerves under the ears, in the jaws, in the elbows, wrists and other parts of the body, but try working holds there on a trained wrestler of any European style and he will laugh at you.

THERE are many grades in the Japanese wrestling system (and jujutsu is wrestling) and also many schools in Japan that teach the art. The grades run from (*shodan*) or first, (*nidan*) or second, (*sandan*), third (*yodan*) fourth, (*godan*) fifth, (*rokudan*) sixth, and last the (*shichidan*) seventh and master.

The word or ideograph "ju" of jujutsu means to obey or submit, and the rest means art or science. Judo has the same ideograph, while the "do" means a road or way.

Sumo wrestling in Japan is engaged in by big fat giants called *sumi-tori*. Hitachiyama, their greatest champion, visited America some years ago but refused to wrestle the American champion, Frank Gotch.

THOUGH writers for some reason will not place in their adventure stories champion wrestlers, yet we find tale after tale of a fighter, licked with ease by some captain or most any one who picks a quarrel with him. Try it in real life. The same goes for even a fair professional wrestler (who, I think, is the real man-handler). Try to handle him and the bucko-mate, the tough guy, the hard-hitting heroes, would think they had struck a fighting gorilla. This is not exaggerated, as in mixed matches between crack boxers and wrestlers, the wrestler has won with ease every time.

Any fair wrestler can snap an arm, leg, wrist or even a neck, but in matches he does not push his holds but makes his opponent give up through pain or get a fall.

Wrestling is the oldest sport in the world and though it has been hurt by many fixed matches, yet it has thousands of followers all over the world.

In my own opinion I consider George Hackenschmidt the greatest wrestler that ever lived and what he would have done as a stowaway under a bucko-mate or adventuring in any other place would have been a story in itself. One of the strongest men in the world; quick as chain-lightning and a past master at wrestling and handling big opponents, he would have caused a fearful scarcity of heroes if he played the bad man and a like dearth if he was against the latter.—CLIFFORD THORNE.

A WORD as to the fat gentleman in actual life whose avoirdupois suggested the avoirdupois of one of the characters in Fred F. Fleischer's story in this issue:

San Francisco.

The Pasha of Mostar was in 1907 still remembered as Abu Sharwal, the father of wide trousers, and I have heard people say that he was so fat that he could not cross the old Roman bridge across the Narenta River—he simply did not fit and could not get over the narrow arch. It must have been a very funny sight to see him on horseback and I believe he had to ride a percheron or a raw-boned Pomeranian horse to carry him. With the exception of the fact that the horse was not an Arabian, the story is truth and I have repeated it as Bogdan told me. I wish I could remember more about the doings of Bosnian gypsies, they are a tribe within a tribe, but I have forgotten and there is no literature bearing even remotely on this subject—FLEISCHER.

WOULD that the anti-weapon campaigners and other cure-it-with-a law fanatics could be made to take so broad and understanding a view of matters:

Moundsville, West Virginia.

It is a great pity that our people cannot learn the view of Montesquieu that it may in rare cases be well to change a law or, in extreme cases, to make a new law, but that this should always be done, as he puts it, "with a trembling hand." The consequences of a law can never be foreseen and are often contrary to the intent of the law. So true is this that one historian has written, "No legal enactment ever benefited commerce unless it was the repeal of laws passed with the intent to benefit commerce." I quote from memory and the phraseology may be inexact but the meaning is correctly given.

One meaning which might profitably be applied to all intended reform laws is the question, how much harm are we going to do in order to effect the proposed good?—L. S. HUGHES.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure,* mostly free, are open to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure,* New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you *post-paid,* the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Missing Friends or Relatives

(See Lost Trails in next issue.)

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL BUY: October, 1914; and February and May, 1915 issues at $1 each.—Address RUDOLPH R. KREBS, 405 West Milwaukee Avenue, Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin.

WILL BUY: July 30, 1922 issue. State your price.—Address FRANK J. CURRAN, 16 Pomander Walk, New York City.

WILL BUY: August 3, 1920 issue. Who can supply it?—Address H. S. AUERBACH, Auerbach Company, Salt Lake City, Utah.

WILL SELL: Issues from 1918 to 1923, inclusive, except May 1920. $10—Address EDWARD F. MENDOSCH, 4204 33rd St., Cincinnati, Ohio.

WILL SELL: Issues from 1914 to 1925, inclusive, except for 16 numbers. 240 numbers including Vols. VIII. to L. with 44 duplicates—Address LUIS A. BARKER, 40 University Place, Brookline, Mass.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscripts. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the second issue of each month. Address letters regarding stations to LAWRENCE JORDAN.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *unstamped* envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure.")

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4—6. Islands and Coasts. In Three Parts
7, 8. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
9. Australia and Tasmania
10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
11. New Guinea
12, 13. Philippine and Hawaiian Islands
13—18. Asia. In Five Parts
19—26. Africa. In Eight Parts
27, 28. Turkey and Asia Minor
29—34. Europe. In Six Parts
35—37. South America. In Three Parts
38. Central America.
39—41. Mexico. In Three Parts
42—50. Canada. In Nine Parts
51. Alaska
52. Baffinland and Greenland
53—58. Western U. S. In Six Parts
59—63. Middle Western U. S. In Five Parts
64—73. Eastern U. S. In Ten Parts
A. Radio
B. Mining and Prospecting
C. Old Songs That Men Have Sung
D 1—3. Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
E. Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
F, G. Forestry in the U. S. and Tropical Forestry
H—J. Aviation, Army and Navy Matters
K. American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
L. First Aid on the Trail
M. Health-Building Outdoors
N. Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada
O. P. Herpetology and Entomology
Standing Information

Bow Wood

A LITTLE known species of timber from Argentina, which could be used instead of hickory:

Request:—"Can you tell me whether a Brazilian wood called *Pao d'arco*; which is I presume "bow wood" in Portuguese, is exported to the United States and whether it goes by any other name?

Can you tell me the names of some importers of tropical woods where the above wood might be secured or other tropical wood suitable for bows?"—J. M. ARMSTRONG, St. Paul, Minn.

Reply, by Mr. Barbour:—*Pao d'arco*, or bow wood, is of the genus Tecoma, and is the same or similar species as *lapacho*, found in northern Argentina and Paraguay, where it is used for wagon spokes and similar purposes.

The wood is very hard and strong, about as heavy as water, of a dark yellowish brown color. It is easily recognizable from the fact that it contains a powdery yellow substance called lapachol, which is very apparent on a freshly sawn surface.

This wood is not imported into the United States, though I believe it could be for uses to which hickory is now put.

Mr. Alvarez, the manager of the Brazilian Mining and Timber Company, of 25 Beaver Street, can, I believe, have some sent up for you with other woods which he imports. If you mention my name when you write him I am sure that he will do what he can to oblige you.

There are a number of tropical woods suited by their strength and elasticity for bow-making. Among them are bethabara, black palm, etc. Manufacturers of fishing rods might be able to tell you where they could be bought.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

Illusion Shows in Papeete

THE natives are crazy about merry-go-rounds, but they like anything that happens in a tent:

Request:—"I have an illusion show, which I have been operating on carnivals in this country. I believe it would go good through the Islands, and as I have long wanted to make the trip, have concluded that it would be a good scheme to combine business with pleasure.

I have a really wonderful show and it is of a nature that should appeal especially to the native population. My present plan is to stop at Honolulu first, then Pago Pago, then Apia Samona, and next Papeete, and would like to be in Papeete for the celebration during week of July 14th—Bastile Week I believe they call it.

Can you put me in touch with some one in charge of arrangements?

Is it possible to get boat connections for Papeete at either Pago Pago or Apia or must one ship direct from here?

Are accomodations expensive?

Is English or French the most spoken.

I use cabbage in one of my illusion acts: Can I secure it in Papeete?

Any other information as to the best means of getting to Papeete, and also as to my chances there with my show will be greatly appreciated.

There are four people in my organization and I show in a tent or could use an empty store building."—M. FLANAGAN, Los Angeles, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Charles Brown:—I am of the opinion that your show would go great in Papeete during the Bastille week. I do not think Tahiti has ever had an illusion show.

You have planned your itinerary quite well—Honolulu, Pago Pago, Apia, Papeete. You cannot make a direct run from Samoa to Tahita, however. It will be necessary to run down to New Zealand and catch a Union Steamship Company steamer for Tahiti.

Write to George Spitz, Papeete, Tahiti, Society Islands, for information pertaining to carnival week. Mr. Spitz, who is one of the councilmen of Papeete, is always on one or more of the Bastille week committees.

You should be able to buy plenty of cabbage in Papeete, for the Chinese are growing the stuff in their hillside truck gardens. About an empty store to show in. Well, if you carry a tent, most likely you will show in it. Another thing. To the native a tent is a mysterious thing, and he'll be more than anxious to get inside. Too bad you are not carrying a merry-go-round outfit; a native will go to ——, dragging the spirits of his father's fathers along with him, for a ride on a merry-go-round. The last outfit that came through, several years ago, cleaned up a young fortune.

French and Tahitian are the official languages; but English is pretty well spoken and understood just the same. Your living expenses per person will amount to $1.50—$2.00 a day.

Of course you could make Papeete your first showing place. After which you would work over to Australia in order to make the run to Samoa. Perhaps you could catch a small schooner out of Raratonga, over in the Cook Islands, next door to Tahiti. I do not know for certain about this.

Indian Arrow-Heads

CLASSIFYING the stone weapons of the aboriginal tribes is a complicated piece of work:

Request:—"I have about a half bushel of Indian Arrow-heads, Spear-heads, Axes, (and skinning knives?) found in the localities mentioned below, and wish to find out something about them so I can mount the best of them in some systematic or intelligent way. These stones vary in size from ½ inch long to 6 inches and are in many different shapes and sizes.

Can you give me any information regarding:—

(1) What tribes of Indians lived in the following localities—

(a) What is now Ashe, and Boone Counties, N. C., and S. W. Virginia.

(b) What is now Agusta, Bath, and Highland Counties, Va.

(2) Did the aboriginal tribes make stone arrowheads for different purposes, such as—one type or size for warfare, another for big game, another for small game, birds, etc., etc.?

(3) Did different tribes make different types of arrow-heads, the shape of which would be more or less characteristic of that tribe?

(4) What books are available which describe the customs, habits, industries, arms and implements of these tribes, and to how much detail do they go into matter which would answer the above questions?

A propos of Indian relics; I found in Ashe County, N. C., what I believe to be an unusual find, *i. e.*—a place where Indians had a regular quarry for getting out soapstone bowls or "pots," and saw the remnants of a number of these "pots" which had been found by the local mountaineers, and secured one fairly good specimen. On one outcrop of soapstone (or pot-stone as often called by the mountaineers), I found where over thirty "pots" had been chipped out of the solid stone. (I had to strip from 6 inches to two feet of earth from over the stone to find most of them). Of particular interest was one bowl or pot which was partly finished but still connected to the bed rock, being only partially undercut. I enclose three kodak pictures of the 'quarry.' "—H. H. Hutchinson, Buchanan, Va.

Reply, by Mr. Woodward:—Pardon the delay in answering your most interesting letter, but you'll compree when I tell you that I have been shifting from Coast to Coast and have been unable to get at my reference books until now.

Answering query number one. The Cherokee tribe roamed the territory now covered by North Carolina and southwest Virginia down into South Carolina, northern Georgia and eastern Tennessee.

Yes, aboriginal tribes did make different arrow points for war and hunting but they were not always tribally characteristic. Stone implements (unless definitely associated with the people of a certain area) are difficult articles to assign with any degree of definiteness to any one tribe.

For example, I have seen delicate leaf-shaped arrow points from the New England states which were identical with similar heads picked up in Arkansas and in California. Often the tribe inhabiting a certain territory manufactured its weapons of the stone or other material best fitted to their needs and their neighbors having other materials made use of them in like manner. Then the two gens would trade and so the points would become hopelessly interchanged and only by knowing of the original nature of the materials used in the separate sections are we able to distinguish between the artifacts.

Dr. Clark Wissler, Curator of Anthropology in the American Museum of Natural History, New York, commenting on the difficult task of identifying stone arrow points says in his section on "Types of Artifacts" in his work, "The American Indian," page 118

"By paying minute regard to size, secondary form and materials, it has been possible to draw some distinctions between arrow-heads from different parts of the two continents, but such study has not advanced to a point where a summary can be made. The fact is that the difficulties of observing consistent distinctions are so great as to be discouraging."

So you see how difficult a definite placement of an artifact is, unless we know just where it was found, of what material it is made, and we know what tribes inhabited that section of country.

Your knives and lance-heads will be difficult to tell apart from arrow-heads, the only difference being in size. Stone drills and scrapers are often mistaken for arrow-heads. The common shapes of arrow-heads are the flat based semi-rounding point. the head with a small shank and rounding shoulders and the notched base type. Of course there are endless variations in these types which it will be needless to enumerate.

As a rule, bird arrows or small game shafts were seldom tipped with stone or other cutting material. Generally a rounded bone or antler point was used or else the shaft was hardened in the fire. This was done to keep the flesh or plumage from being bruised and cut.

WAR arrows were serrated as a rule and the heads set loosely in the socket of the shaft with sinew which loosened with blood and left the head in the wound when the arrow was pulled out. Ordinary hunting arrows were generally without notches along the edge and were set tight in the shaft Points of deer and elk antler were used by some tribes in preference to stone. Such heads had great power of penetration and would not shatter against bones as would the more brittle stone points, but would drill through rib or shoulder blade like a modern sharp pointed rifle bullet. Many desert dwellers used cane shafts with hard wood for shafts with minute points. I have one of these points which is as small as my index finger nail yet is sharp as glass. Such a head set in a hard wood fore shaft would be capable of doing great execution. As a rule, the Indians on coming into contact with the whites gave over their native points of stone, antler, bone and wood and made their arrow-heads of iron, copper, brass and tin.

That will give you a general idea of arrow heads in use among the various tribes.

Answering your fourth question I would refer you to the Hand Book of the American Indian, Vols. 1 and 2, for further information regarding customs, habits, weapons, etc., of the various tribes. The info therein is concise, reliable and easily obtained from the nearest large library. To read up on the Cherokees, get hold of The Fifth Annual Report of, the Bureau of Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.

Regarding your steatite or soapstone quarry. Soapstone was quarried by the aboriginal tribes of this continent from the Appalachian highland of Georgia to New York and in the west, particularly in California. Being of such a degree of softness that made chipping or fracturing by alternate heating and dousing with water, unnecessary, the steatite was chiseled and cut out with stone and bone implements. Your photos show a typical soapstone quarry.

Other quarries were in flint, copper, alum, turquoise, coal (for ornaments and dyes), catlinite, cinnabar, mica, salt, ocher, chert and other flakable stones.

These quarries were worked extensively and thousands of tools, and implements and household utensils were the result. At times, for some unknown reason, caches of roughly shaped artifacts taken from these quarries were buried by the makers. In one cache alone, unearthed in Maryland I believe, there were four thousand discoidal objects of chipped flint. Similar large caches of lance heads and knives have also been discovered by archaeologists.

Well, I hope in these few pages I have been able to give you some idea of the working of flint artifacts. It is an endless subject and would require many more pages than I am able to devote to it to tell in detail the processes of stone implement manufacture. The Hand Book will tell you all that.

Come again some time.

P. S. I notice in answering question one I overlooked a portion of your query regarding mounting of specimens.

Sort them according to size and shape. Determine as best you can which are knives, which are lance-heads, drills, arrow-heads, etc. Forms one half inch to two inches in length may fairly safely be classed as arrow-heads. Make a card noting place found, material used and give each specimen a number. Heads may be wired to cards or boards covered with dark cloth and placed in case. Museum collectors laugh at the fanciful arrangements of "Indian heads," "arrow-heads," "fleur-de-lis" and other shapes outline with so much care by the amateur collectors. Learn something about your specimens and the people who made them and go about the thing in a systematic way, just as you would if you were running a line with the "gun" for some big project. "Blue print work" and a savvy of your subject is as essential in collecting as a knowledge of triangulation and use of a transit is in your own line.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Gold-Hunting in Alaska

IT'S a particularly strenuous trip to the Kantishna, but there is still some gold there. And some silver, too:

Request:—"My partner and myself are planning a four month's trip into the Kantishna river district of Alaska. Will start about the first of September and will spend the time hunting and prospecting. We have very little knowledge of prospecting or the geology of the country and would appreciate any information you can give us on the following:

1—What kind of an outfit will we need for such a trip, in equipment, clothes and food? (We will ascend to the headwaters of the Kantishna by canoe and will only take the barest necessities.)

2—What minerals may we expect to find in that district and how should we proceed to find them?

3—How should the claim be filed, worked, or marketed?

4—General geology necessary for prospector."—Clifford C. Macklin, Omaha, Neb.

Reply, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—You are certainly planning some strenuous trip, if you are going to the Kantishna. I suppose you plan to enter *via* Nenana on the Yukon, and from Anchorage up the Gov't R. R. The placers on the upper Kantishna River were mostly dredging operations in 1920, the last year in which Gov't reports were compiled. At that time, there were about 1200 oz. of gold recovered valued at about $25,000. The ground averaged around $1 per cu. yd. There were about 20 mines working, the largest output coming from Glenn Creek; the next in order were Eureka, Moose, Little Moose, and Wickersham. There has been quite a bit of galen found which carries silver; but the placer of that section are not considered rich.

There are several sourdoughs here who have been in that section since 1920. They tell me that there is little prospecting there now. They say the old properties are idle and deserted.

IF YOU go in, I'd advise you to keep to the west when ascending the river. Pass the branch coming in from Lake Minchumina, and then keep bearing westward up-river. This will take you up to the west and north of Mt. McKinley, which region is said to be good prospecting. You'll find spruce, poplar and larch timber, with thickets of willow and alder. Moss covers everything, and most of the timber is along creeks or at the base of the hills. There is birch also, and much grass. The large animals include moose, caribou and bear, but they are rather scarce, for some reason not yet known. Practically no population, white or Indian, and little or no hunting. Smaller fur animals are numerous, also grouse and water fowl. Quite a bit of rain in that section.

If you don't find good ground in there, work westerly to the head of the North Fork of the Kuskoquwim River, which heads *to the west* of Lake Minchumina. Fair placer has been found there and also at the extreme head of the South Fork, which is down near the Yentna River.

The ground around the Tolovana River, which comes into the Yukon above the Kantishna and on the north side, is pretty good I am told, up around Livengood; also at Chatanika, up the Chatanika River. They lie due north from Fairbanks.

I enclose a leaflet which will give you a general idea of outfit, as far as tools go. You'll need furs for the winter up there, also dogs if you intend any winter traveling. You'll get the proper craft for working up-river at Nenana. You can tent in summer and locate a patch of timber and build a solid cabin for winter, packing in the necessary stove. I wouldn't bother taking anything except guns and some heavy clothing with you; get your outfit up at Nenena. You haven't said whether you will go via Yukon River steamer, or via R. R. In the case of the steamer, it would perhaps pay you to take most of your outfit with you. Via steamer, you'd get off at Tanana and go up that river, past Hot Springs. There is a tin mine near Hot Springs. The minerals you find up the Kantishna are gold, silver, lead, copper, gray copper, (or tetra hedrite), so far as is now known.

You must file your claims at the nearest land office probably at Nenana, or Hot Springs. You can take 20 acres of placer, or 1500 x 600 feet on a lode claim. Better get Wilson's Mining Laws, $1.50, at your bookstore, or 340 Wilcox Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif. If you will also send $1.00 to the latter address for The Miner's Guide, it will tell you how to work a claim. As to marketing, sell your gold to the nearest gold-buyer.

What a Yeoman Does

GOOD pay and excellent opportunities for promotion make this a desirable branch of naval life:

Request:—"If it would not be too much trouble, I wish you would assist me in the following:

Where is it possible to get copies of Naval Regulations?

Would also like to locate a book on drills.

The reason that I am in search of such information is that in the course of a few months I intend to enlist as a Yeoman. Anything that you may have in regards to this branch of service will be greatly appreciated by me.

Am enclosing an addressed and stamped envelope for your convenience."—JOSEPH DRAGER, Oshkosh, Wis.

Reply, by Lieutenant Greene:—A Naval Yeoman is a clerk, the duties of the rating are very similar to those of clerks in civilian life. In addition to these duties he has stations at various drills that are connected with battle and the safety of the ship, fire, collision, general quarters, abandon ship, etc. General Quarters mean a station for battle. It is impossible to say in advance just what these stations may be.

A Yeoman ranks as a petty officer of 3rd class, 2nd class, 1st class, Chief acting appointment, Chief permanent appointment. The pay of these ratings are: 3rd class $60.00 per month, 2nd class $72.00 per month, 1st class $84.00 per month, Chief acting appointment $99.00 per month, Chief permanent appointment $126.00 per month. These amounts are base pay for the first four years. To compute the pay for the second four years add 10% of this base pay, for the third four add 15%, for the fourth add 20%, and for service after 16 years add 25%. For instance: base pay of Chief petty officer $126.00, to compute pay after 16 years service add 25%. 25% of 126 equals $31.50 plus $126.00 is 157.50 which is the pay of a Chief after 16 years service.

Promotion up to the rank of Yeoman 1st class is fairly fast, depending of course on efficiency and conduct, of late owing to reductions in the Navy, men in all ranks have had to wait for a long time to promotion to Chief, though it is certain to come in the end. If you wish to stay in the Navy for a long time promotion to the commissioned officer rank is open to you, in this case leading through the Warrant Officer rank of Pay Clerk and from that to Ensign, the last being a commissioned officer of the same relative rank as that of 2nd Lieutenant in the Army. After getting the first commission if one applies themselves to the business of getting it, there is nothing to keep them from reaching the highest rank.

While a knowledge of shorthand is not required, it is a very good thing for a yeoman to have skill in, there are not many yeomen that know anything about it, and knowing it may lead eventually to appointment as secretary to an Admiral, this is really the cream of the jobs that a yeoman can hold and makes promotion very sure.

Upon entry into the Navy you will be supplied with uniforms and other clothing that will give you a good start, after this you will then have to buy your own clothes. These can be purchased from the Navy very much cheaper than you can buy the same grade of goods ashore.

There is one thing that I should like to mention though, if you wish to take a little advice from an old timer in the outfit. Give it long and serious thought before you sign a four year contract with the Navy, and remember that you are going to make an entire change in the manner of living that you are used to. It is a very exacting service, the discipline is very strict, and one has to make good before one will get anywhere. I mention this not because I wish to frighten you, but because I have seen many men go on the rocks; they could not make it go and landed upon the list of deserters or with an undesirable discharge.

FOR my part, I consider the Navy a very good place. You can depend that they are absolutely on the level in their dealing with the men. The only formula for getting along there is, try to learn all you can about the Navy and your own work, keep a good conduct sheet and your appearance neat and clean.

Now about the books that you mention: The regulations are not available for purchase, but if you will address the U. S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, Md., you can get the following official books that cover the Navy and drills.

"The Bluejacket's Manual," 6th Ed. 518 pages. Price $1.00

This covers description of the duties of a Navy man better than any book that I know of and is written by a Naval Officer.

Other books that cover all the drills of the Navy are:

"The Boat Book"........................	$ .50
"Ship and Gun Drills".....................	.50
"The Landing Force Manual".............	1.00

Order these from the same place.

If there is anything else that I can advise you on write and let me know what it is, I will always be glad to answer.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

Oil in Colombia

ALSO gold in Guiana. Chances are good for men with experience on the Big Ditch:

Request:—"My brother and I intend to strike out for Colombia in the near future. We both have spent several years on the Panama Canal years ago. We are both forty years of age. He is an A1 machinist and I am an electric light and power man. We have a stake of several hundred dollars.

Please give me what information you have available concerning the oil fields in Colombia, also any information concerning the gold strike in either French or British Guiana. I was reading an account given by an officer of the U. S. Army returning from the Rio fair of his observations in this placer field and of the good prospects. I figured on the oil fields for a while to look around and work for a time until something materializes. You'll understand what I mean. I'm one of the old-timers of the "ditch," 1908 to 1914.

Does the Panama R. R. Line operate a "steerage" at $30.00 as in the booming days?

Any information you have will be appreciated. I am enclosing an addressed envelope for a reply for which I now thank you in advance."—MATTHEW MCDONALD.

Reply, by Mr. Young:—The main oil operations in Colombia are those of the International Oil Co., 54 Church St., Toronto, Ont. (This is a Standard Oil subsidiary). They have quite a plant at Barranca Bermeja up the Magdalena River from Cartagena. Now and then they ship men down and they might make you an offer if you told them you had experience in the tropics and if not they might direct you to some one who would employ you. The pay is good and conditions are about like they were on the big ditch. The Dutch Shell and several other companies are operating in several places, but this is the best bet. If you want a voluminous account of all the oil operations in Colombia write Joseph Sinclair, 30 Fifth Ave., New York, N. Y., and ask him for his booklet "Oil Development in Colombia." He and a friend mapped parts of Colombia and Ecuador for an oil syndicate and he knows more about it than any one I know.

The gold strike in French and British Guiana seems to be more wind than anything else. There always has been a bit of gold mined in both countries but neither has ever compared with Colombia as a gold producer. Colombia has regularly exported about a million a month for the past twenty years and before that many hundreds of millions more.

Wm. Morlock, now operating a mine at El Borde, Cauca, Colombia, says that prospects are good in his neighborhood and he might be a good man to tie to. He will answer a letter from you if you mention my name. They are getting it out in a thousand other places in Colombia also.

See the Encyclopedia Britannica under heading *Colombia* for a good article covering the country in a general way. Also write Pan American Union, Washington, D. C., for their booklet "Colombia."

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Hunting in Idaho

DEER, cougar, bear, lynx, elk, moose and mountain goat make this a sportsman's paradise. There is plenty of fishing besides, and the scenery is grand:

Request:—"For years I have spent my vacation deer hunting in northern California in the Klamath River District. Have experienced years of good and bad hunting, but as a whole, after a great deal of hard work, have been fairly well satisfied.

New hunters join our crowd and are forever making comparisons with other hunting grounds. We have heard much of hunting in Idaho and if our new member is not exaggerating, the hunting is far better in Idaho than at our old stamping grounds. We have discussed a change, but have been unable to reach a decision. We desire some authentic information and also a definite hunting location. Hence, I am taking advantage of the privilege granted to Adventure Magazine subscribers and putting the problem up to you.

To be brief:

a. Trip to be made by automobile from San Francisco in November.

b. Must not exceed three weeks.

c. Deer and small game hunting desired, but if possible would like to get into an elk and bear country.

d. On account of limited time, do not wish to pack in. Would much rather, if possible to get good hunting, make camp with the automobile.

It appears to me that answers to the following questions would enable us to reach a decision:

1. Do you consider that the hunting is better in any certain part of Idaho than in the Klamath River District, California?
2. If so, what part?
3. Is it possible, in three week's time, to make a hunting trip to this location in Idaho from San Francisco by automobile and have at least ten days hunting?
4. If packing-in is necessary, please, if possible, advise me of a man from whom horses, etc., could be procured.
5. Please inform me the route to the hunting grounds from a city or town in Idaho shown on the map.

The above information will be greatly appreciated and I will thank you very much for your trouble.

If you desire to publish this letter, please do not print my name."—— ——, San Francisco, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Newman:—In answer to your letter of the 2nd, inst, I wish to refer you to several counties in Northern Idaho, as this territory is considered a hunter's paradise.

Boundary County.

The scenery to be found in this county is the equal of any in the west. Its snowcapped mountains, green treed gulches, and snow water creeks are wonderfully attractive. This county is also a sportsman's paradise. The mountains are well denizened with cougar, bear, lynx and all kinds of smaller animals. In fact many people earn their livelihood during the winter season by trapping within not more than 10 miles from Bonners Ferry. The streams and lakes are well-filled with mountain trout, char, bass, sturgeon, whitefish and ling, and are being yearly restocked by the hatchery within 30 miles of Bonners Ferry. You go to Bonners Ferry to get to the Hunting grounds in this county.

Clearwater County.

The Bitterroot Mountains are widely known for their unsurpassed beauty and as a recreation ground for hunters and fishermen. Hundreds of tourists and sportsmen visit the county annually.

The North Fork and its tributaries are among the best trout streams of the Northwest. Deer, elk, mountain goat, moose and bear frequent the higher ranges. Go to Lewiston or Orofino, Idaho, to reach the hunting grounds in this county.

Idaho County.

The vast mountainous county east and south of Grangeville, Idaho, is a wonderful big game and fishing country, and is the sportsman's paradise. Those parties desiring to hunt large game can procure guides, and supplies at this point with unlimited wood, water, and horse food throughout the mountain territory.

Latah County. Go to Moscow.

This county has some of the finest scenery in the west, ranging from the lofty timbered mountains in the east to the rolling prairies in the west. The swift flowing mountain streams abound in trout. Big game is found in the timbered regions. Game birds such as Chinese, Hungarian, timber pheasants, prairie chickens, grouse, and other game birds afford good sport to the lover of the great out-doors.

Referring to your question one, I can not say, as I have never been in the state of California, but I suggest you hunters try Idaho once, and in the territory I have described.

If you have a good car, and good roads and do not strike any snow in November, you should be able to get ten days hunting in Idaho.

Regarding game license. It is unlawful for any person to have in his or her possession, any uncased shotgun or rifle in a field or forest of the state of Idaho without first having procured a license. The non-resident big game hunting license in this state is $25.00; the non-resident bird license is $5.00; and the non-resident fishing license $3.00. There is nothing in the law to prohibit any person from carrying sidearms for the protection of life and property. Additional information can be secured from Mr. R. E. Thomas, State Game Warden, Boise, Idaho.

I take pleasure in sending you under separate cover, a folder map of Blazed Trails in Idaho, give you the Highways, and if you will refer to back cover, you can see that you can secure additional maps of Utah or New Mexico, if you happen to be traveling these States in your trip.

"Garden of the West Indies"

THE subjoined monograph on the Bay Islands or Islas de Bahia of Spanish Honduras has been printed in leaflet form on hard paper. The leaflet may be obtained free from the "Ask Adventure" expert responsible for it: namely Charles Bell Emerson, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, California. Don't expect any response unless you enclose addressed envelop and return postage.

To the northward of the main land of Spanish Honduras, in the bay of the same name, there is a cluster of islands lying nearly parallel to the coast, at a distance from it of from thirty to fifty miles. Their names, in the order of their size, are Roatan (sometimes written Ruatan and Rattan), Guanaja (or Bonacca), Utilla, Barbaretta, Helena, and Morat. Dependent upon them are numerous coral islets or "cays" of small size. These islands have good soil, fine climate, advantageous position, and some of them have excellent harbors, rendering them both valuable and important to that portion of the continent upon which they are geographically dependent.

Roatan, the largest of these islands, is about thirty miles long by nine wide at widest point. Quoting from various visitors to these islands:

"It may be considered as a key of the Bay of Honduras, and the focus of the trade of the neighboring countries."

"This beautiful island has an excellent harbor, easily defended, and is well adapted to the culture of cotton, coffee, and other tropical products."

"The local position of the island seems one of importance in a commercial world, and perhaps in a political, point of view. It is the only place where good harbors are found on an extensive and dangerous coast."

"Its proximity to Central America and Spanish Honduras seems to point it out as a good depot for the world's goods and manufactures, where they would find a ready market, even in opposition to any duties placed on them."

"Roatan and Bonacca, in consequence of their fine harbors, good soil, pure air, and great quantities of animals, fish, and fruits, and commanding ground, are proverbially known in that part of the world as the 'Garden of the West Indies,' 'The Key to Spanish America,' and a 'New Gibraltar.'

"From their natural strength they might be made impregnable, being tenable with a very small force."

"Here are found great quantities of coconuts, wild figs, and excellent grapes. The forests produce white oaks and pine-trees fit for masts of merchant ships. It abounds with deer, wild hogs, Indian rabbits, and birds of many species. A constant breeze from the east cools and tempers the air, and there is abundance of excellent water."

"The island is one beautiful mass of evergreens, from the shore to the tops of the hills, interspersed with many coconut gardens; and there are many patches of coffee, which, although in some parts abandoned, yet continue to thrive well."

"Limestone is the principal formation: there are also sandstone and quartz and a great deal of coral on the lower parts. The island seems originally to have been elevated by a volcanic eruption, and the lower portions washed up by the subsequent action of the sea. On the coral formations sand has been thrown up; then decayed vegetable matter and seeds, drifted or brought by birds from the continent and surrounding lands. These, springing up and decaying, have assisted in forming a beautiful soil, on which man has at length landed, erected his dwelling, and has found the land subservient to his wants, this applies to the lower portions of the island only."

So far no minerals have been collected on these islands.

"The island has a singularly beautiful appearance at a distance, as you approach it in a ship. The mountains rise in a gradual height to the summit of nine hundred feet, and they seem successively to follow each other, intersected by valleys, the whole thickly and most luxuriously wooded. As you draw near to it, you discover that palm and coconut-trees encircle the shores, and forest trees of various description grow on the higher hills. The natural beauty of its appearance is greatly enhanced when you cast anchor in one of its many harbors on the southern side."

"In the valleys, alluvial deposits and decayed vegetable matter form the soil, which is exceedingly rich and deep. On the mountains and their declivities, a red clay or marl predominates."

"A great deal of good and useful timber is found spontaneously growing on the island, such as Santa Maria wood, extensively used for ship-building, three varieties of oak, cedar, Spanish elm, and lancewood, and the shores are lined and surrounded with groves of coconut-trees; a tree which, in administering to the wants of man, is hardly surpassed in tropical regions."

"At present the island produces in abundance coconuts, plantains, yams, bananas, pine-apples, etc.; but probably bread-fruit, and vegetables, and many kinds of fruits and vegetables of the temporate regions will grow here."

"The country is capable of raising all tropical productions, such as sugar, coffee, tobacco, etc., which might become staple commodities of export."

"There was found on the island of Roatan, previous to its being inhabited, a great quantity of deer, wild hogs, rabbits, parrots, pigeons, and birds of various descriptions."

"In years past, previous to its settlement, men from small vessels and fishing boats resorted to this island for the purpose of supplying themselves with game."

"A great quantity of domestic animals are now raised; cattle might also be raised."

"It seems probable that the islands at some remote period were thickly inhabited by the Indian race, for in clearing away the land for plantations, many domestic and culinary utensils have been found. There is a tradition that the Spaniards (in accordance with their system of cruelty), on their first discovery of America, depopulated these islands of the original people; seizing upon the aborigines, taking them to the continent to work in the mines, from whence they never returned."

A GREAT deal of rain falls in the winter months from September to February.

This has the effect of cooling the air beyond what is felt in the other parts of the West Indies, and the breeze tempers the influence of the sun.

If the people could keep themselves dry and free from damp, the climate must not only be exceedingly agreeable, but singularly pure and healthy.

The dry months are much warmer; the natives, however, do not complain of the heat; they say that it is the healthiest portion of the year. The thermometer during January averaged 80 degrees F.

"Rheumatism is very common, and also a species of low fever or ague; this latter probably arises from the land not being sufficiently cleared away, and from a luxuriant and decaying vegetation; the former malady from constant damp and exposure."

The climate is really healthy, not only to those born in warm latitudes, but also to those of temperate climates, for with proper precautions, they could not only have health, but live to good old age.

The population is scattered along the whole seashore of this island, as they find these different locations more convenient than in the interior. Here they erect their dwellings, in the midst of their palm and plantain groves, having their little vessels and fishing-boats in quiet and sheltered nooks, and convey their produce and seek for their wants by water-carriage. At Coxen Hole (old name was Port M'Donald), the greatest numbers are located; it is a safe and sheltered harbor; yet chance seems to have directed them, in the first instance, to this spot, as there are other and better locations for a township. The mass of the population is composed of the descendants of liberated slaves from Grand Cayman, and a small portion of the inhabitants are colored people, also natives of that island, and formerly slave-owners.

The dark population, or those who were formerly slaves, from their physical powers and their habits of labor from childhood, soon surpassed the white population in the accumulation of the means of existence, and are now the most thriving and successful, if riches be estimated from man's wants being easily supplied, and the accumulation of more than he requires, these people are not only wealthy, but in far better circumstances than many of those who are relieved from manual labor in other countries.

THE mass of the population is a fine race. They are strong, active, and athletic, temperate, quiet, and regular in their habits, not given to excess.

Their occupation consists in cultivating their grounds and plantations, fishing, turtling, etc. Necessity, in all countries and in the first rude ages of civilization, has been fertile in invention, consequently it is by no means extraordinary to find the mass of these people familiar with those rude mechanical arts of which they stand so much in need. Every man erects his own dwelling, plants and lays out his ground; most of them are carpenters, and some are good rope-makers. They have a knowledge of boat and ship building also the making of lime, etc., and other useful attainments. Their dwellings are well and comfortably made.

THE trade carried on by them in plantains, coconuts, pine-apples, etc., which same trade is steadily increasing, the articles mentioned are taken to New Orleans in exchange for lumber, dry and salt provisions, etc.

Dixon's Cove is a good harbor, is about six miles east of Coxen Hole, and in some respects is a better harbor, as a ship can run into this harbor and ground upon the soft mud without injury, for repairs etc., and it is big enough so that many ships can find anchorage there.

Another harbor is Port Royal, which is a larger basin, but its entrance is very narrow, this being its drawback, and the land is not so fertile.

"These harbors are surrounded by reefs of coral; their channels are narrow, and ought never to be attempted by strangers; but a local knowledge is easily obtained. The channels between the reefs are deep, and show themselves by the blueness of the water."

Any further questions will be answered upon request.

A two-cent stamp won't carry everywhere.

Deep Sea Tales

HERE'S a list of books that will appeal to all those who love ships and the sea:

Request:—"Did an author named Lubbock write sea stories? One title I think was 'Around The Horn Before The Mast.' Do not know if this is in your department. If you know of any real stories by men who know the sea a list would be appreciated. Thanking you for the courtesy of a reply."—JAMES E. COOPER, Washington, D. C.

Reply, by Mr. Rieseberg:—In answer to your request in which you inquire as to the author of "Around the Horn Before the Mast," I wish to advise you that I think this story was written by Felix Riesenberg, who also wrote "Under Sail."

As requested, I am listing below a list of "real" tales of the sea and ships which have been written by men who know the sea.

"The Cruise of the Cachalot"	Frank Bullen
"Sailing Ships"	E. K. Chatterton
"Marvels of the Ship"	E. K. Chatterton
"Fore and Aft Craft"	E. K. Chatterton
"Out of Gloucester"	James Connelly
"Open Water"	James Connelly
"Two Years Before the Mast"	Dana
"Among Our Sailors"	G. W. Jewell
"Where Angels Fear to Tread"	Morgan Robertson
"Moby Dick"	Herman Melville
"Lost Ships and Lonely Seas"	Ralph Paine
"Fury"	Edmund Goulding

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

THE following song, "Donald Monroe," or "Two Sons of North Britain," comes to the department from Mr. Ray Judy of Seattle, Washington. It has suffered much in the process of being passed on for years from singer to singer, but is in better condition than several other texts that have come in. I requested Mr. Judy to make no attempt to "straighten out" the rhymes or the constructions, and he has sent the text just as he heard it sung.

Of its history he says in part: "My grandfather, Charles Emerson, was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, but moved to Canada when a mere child, and, I suppose, learned and sung the song in Ontario, Canada. He sang it sixty years ago."

Donald Monroe

Of all the sons of North Britain, those wishing to roam,
To seek foreign countries and lands that are strange,

Among the vast number was Donald Monroe,
And he to America was forcéd to go.

His two sons with his brother was forcéd to stay,
Because of their passage they could not well pay.

And seven years being over and long passed away,
They went to their uncle one day all alone,

To see if he would grant them, to cross them o'er the main,
That they with their parents in plenty might remain.

But their uncle replied them, and answered them, "No,
For since you have no money you can not go."

Their minds being disturbed, no rest could they find;
The thoughts of the army still run in their minds.

And walking along till once they had found
A regiment of soldiers for America was bound,

With whom they enlisted, and soon took the main,
In order to see their dear parents again.

But when they had landed in this country so wild,
Surrounded by rebels on every side,

With humble submission the two of them went
To their kind captain to beg of his consent,

To let them up the country, their parents for to see,
With whom their kind captain with them did agree.

On leaving the tent, they took a boy for their guide,
To show them the place where their parents resided.

They were walking along when one of them said,
"Oh, could we but find our dear parents to-day!

"I'm sure it will surprise them to find us so near
For that of our enlisting they have not yet heard."

And walking little farther they came to a grove
Where the trees and the bushes all seeméd to move,—

There being two rebels a-lurking in the woods,
And pointing their pieces where the two brothers stood.

And lodging their bullets all into their breast
They ran to their prey like some ravenous beast.

To rob them of their money and strip them of their clothes,—
One of them not being dead they gave him some blows.

He cried, "Oh, you cruel monsters, you blood-thirsty hounds!
How could you have killed us till once we had found?

"It's of our dearest parents whom we have long sought with care,
I'm sure when they hear this they'll die in despair:

"They left us in Scotland some seven years ago,
Perhaps you may know them; their name is Monroe."

The old man, being their father, he stood in amaze
His heart filled with sorrow, with grief and surprise.

Crying, "Where shall I wander, this sight to shun?
Oh, curse be my hands, I have murdered my sons!"

"Oh, are you our father?" the young man cried,
"I'm glad that I've seen you before that I died.

"Oh, how is dear mother, and is she quite well?
I'm sure when she hears this her poor heart will swell!"

"Oh, who is that young man that lies by your side?
What is his name, and where does he reside?"

"It's my beloved brother and your beloved son;
The loss would have been less had I fallen alone.

"But there is one advice I'll give you before that I die,
It's leave off rebellion in time and be wise.

"And perhaps we may meet on some happier shore
Where you won't be able to kill us any more."

As thus he had spoken, and down dropped his head,
The old man examined him and found he was dead.

He kissèd their bodies as cold as the clay
And cursed his misfortunes on that fatal day.

Crying, "Why did I the rebels join to assist in this
bad cause,
To kill my own children against nature's laws?

"I'll grieve out my sorrow, give way to despair,
And burst out my life till death ends my care!"

It's probable that there exist other versions of this song still sung by the older generation of men. I'd like much to obtain such versions, and to know where, when, and by whom they were sung.

AND who can add more to the following fragment that came in, the other day, from a correspondent in Montana?

I'm a rambler and a gambler and far from my home,
And those that don't like me can leave me alone.

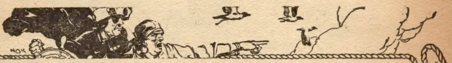
I'm a-leaving, a-leaving, a-leaving Cheyenne
With a pack on old Baldy and riding old Dan.

I eat when I'm hungry, I drink when I'm dry,
And if whisky don't kill me, I'll live till I die.
Oh, whisky and beer they are nothing to me,
They killed my old Dad, now they can try me.

Go 'way from my window, come in at my door;
I know you drink moonshine, you did once before.

My wife does not worry, my children don't ball;
I'm as happy as one who keeps bachelor's hall.

SEND all contributions of old songs, and all questions about them, direct to R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Massachusetts. DO NOT send them to the magazine.



THE TRAIL AHEAD

AUGUST 10TH ISSUE

Besides the **new serial** and the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

THE BULLFIGHT *Percy Charles C. Chandler*
He hated to see a horse gored.

THE BOLD DRAGOON Conclusion *Leonard H. Nason*
Wherein we seek our fortunes overseas.

BREED OF THE WILD GEESE *Frank E. Evans*
They were a laughing, fighting crew, those *Dillons*.

THE TOKEN OF THE FOREST *Stanton C. Lapham*
The wilderness makes no friends with weaklings.

THE LAST TRAIL *F. St. Mars*
Polecat and rat are enemies to the death.

HATE *David M. Newell*
Fate found it useful in the piney woods.

STILL FARTHER AHEAD

THE THREE ISSUES following the next will contain *long* stories by William Byron Mowery, L. Patrick Greene, Romaine H. Lowdermilk, Farnham Bishop, W. C. Tuttle, Talbot Mundy, Gordon MacCreagh and Charles Victor Fischer; and short stories by L. Paul, John Murray Reynolds, Ralph R. Perry, Wilkeson O'Connell, Bill Adams, E. S. Pladwell, F. St. Mars, Bruce Johns, Raymond S. Spears, Walter J. Coburn, Fairfax Downey, Leslie MacFarlane and others; stories about fur pirates off Siberia, missionaries and traders in Africa, treasure hunters in the American desert, ancient Romans in the British Isles, Yankee gobs in Guantanamo Bay, cowboy detectives on the Western range, white explorers up the Amazon, able seamen on the Atlantic, malemiuts on the snow-scourged trails, filibusters in C. A.

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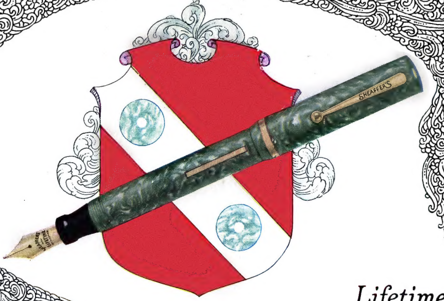

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